

CHINESE BUDDHISM IN CATHOLIC PHILIPPINES

SYNCRETISM AS IDENTITY



ARI C. DY, SJ



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by Ari C. Dy, SJ

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Note about Chinese Romanization

In general, I use Hanyu Pinyin to transliterate Chinese characters, except for proper names that are common place, e.g., Kaohsiung, or the preferred transliteration style of individuals and institutions in the Philippines. In the latter case, I use the self-styled Hokkien transliteration of the individual or institution, for the main reason that these are the names they actually use in English. I also provide Chinese characters the first time a term is used. Where there are no Chinese characters provided, this means that they were not indicated in the sources and could not be ascertained.

I italicize Pinyin transliterations for terms and titles of texts, but not for proper names of individuals and institutions.

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Introduction

I first became conscious of being Chinese when my paternal grandfather died. I was barely nine years old, but the elaborate funerary rituals, the mourning customs, and the major changes in the physical layout of the family dining room all indicated that family life would never be the same again.

It was the first death in the family. The patriarch had become an ancestor. After Angkong[1] was buried, a Chinese altar, with the accompanying table for making offerings, was purchased and installed in the dining room. His portrait and altar faced the dining table, and from then on, the altar would be the focal point of family life. There would always be some food offerings there, and every morning, Amma[2] would burn some incense. More elaborate offerings were made on the anniversaries of his birth and death, and the Chinese festivals for the dead such as Qingming in April and the Hungry Ghosts on the seventh lunar month.

After Angkong's death, I also became more aware of my grandmother's Buddhist faith. Many times, I accompanied her to Seng Guan Temple, where Angkong's spirit tablet[3] was kept and where she attended Buddhist assemblies on certain feast days. I remember the chanting, the circumambulating around the large hall, and the shower of candies that marked the end of the session.

My exposure to Chinese religious rituals, especially the Buddhist practices of my grandmother, gave me not only a sense of being Chinese, but also a sense of the supernatural. My formal religious training was in the Catholic faith, and today I am an ordained Jesuit priest, but the Chinese rituals of my childhood never left my consciousness.

I became Catholic because my parents sent me and my siblings to a Catholic school and saw no conflict in observing Catholic rituals along with the Chinese rituals at home. They were married in the Catholic Church, although they were not churchgoing Christians. In a country such as the Philippines where the Chinese were a minority, it was important to adapt to the local culture. Embracing Christianity was one way of doing that.

I became a practicing Catholic in my teenage years because I found the religious

activities in school meaningful, and when this faith ultimately resulted in training for the priesthood, I began to reflect more deeply on my identity as an ethnic Chinese Catholic.

Bridging Chinese culture and Christian faith was a process the Church called inculturation and it involved, among other things, the incorporation of Chinese cultural and religious elements into Catholic belief and practice. It was, and still is, a daring effort. Catholic missionaries since the 17th century have been trying to present Christianity as being compatible with Chinese culture.[4] In the 20th century, this has found expression in the development of Chinese Christian art and the promotion of a formal ritual to venerate the ancestors in a Catholic setting.[5] Despite these efforts, most Chinese still perceive Christianity as a foreign religion. This is why it is common for Chinese Catholics in the Philippines to separate their Catholic practices from Chinese religious rituals. The two coexist, but the situation is far from ideal as far as the Catholic side is concerned. Catholic authorities desire an integration of Chinese culture with Christian faith, and I became personally involved in such efforts[6] but it was, and is, a big struggle.

I begin this book by sharing my personal experiences with Chinese religion, Buddhism, the Catholic faith, and Chinese identity because these perspectives inform what I have to say about Buddhism, its adaptation in China and among the overseas Chinese, its engagement with Catholicism in the Philippines, and its role in conceptions of Chinese identity. My own desire to live a faith that is integrated with Chinese culture has been enriched by the study of Chinese Buddhism among the overseas Chinese because I see Chinese Buddhism as an example of successful inculturation, such that it is even a marker of Chinese identity.

Chinese religion

Buddhism originated in India (5th century BCE), but it has been present in China (1st century CE) far longer than Christianity[7] and has been “inculturated” to such an extent that it has become Chinese.[8]

Even prior to the coming of Buddhism to China, there was already a Chinese religion that was expressed in the worship of ancestors, shamanism, and other beliefs and practices. It is this broad concept of Chinese religion, not confined to the syncretism of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, which has become part of Chinese identity among overseas Chinese. That Chinese religion is part of Chinese identity and culture has been acknowledged in studies relating to China,[9] but has not received much attention in studies of the Chinese overseas. By studying Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, I try to demonstrate that the practice of Chinese religion, whether in syncretistic form or in narrower conceptions of Buddhism or Daoism, is a significant marker of Chinese identity.

Like many communities of Chinese overseas, those in the Philippines in the 20th century tended to live in a geographically defined area either by choice or by political circumstance. Family associations, hometown organizations, and temples were the spaces where socialization took place, along with community services such as schools, newspapers, cinemas, and fire brigades. These were the institutions that preserved Chinese language and culture and allowed the expression of Chinese beliefs and practices.

The Chinese in the Philippines articulated their cultural identity as involving the study and minimal speaking of Chinese language (Mandarin or Hokkien), socialization with fellow Chinese, observance of Chinese customs, and identification by self and others as Chinese (McCarthy 1974, 1). The closest thing to religion in this definition is the mention of Chinese customs. Indeed, religion has not been seen as a primary factor in the identity formation of overseas Chinese. The Chinese were perceived by the non-Chinese as being practical in religious matters, such that even for the majority who self-identified as being Catholic, religious syncretism was an accepted reality. The Chinese could then practice their own religious customs while at the same time profess to be Christians. Religion was seen as “a unifying factor between Filipinos and Chinese” (Ang-See 1997, 56).

Research questions

Chinese cultural identity in the Philippines has been framed in terms of language

and culture rather than religion. Culture, however, cannot be separated from religion,[10] especially given its broad meaning in Chinese religion.[11]

The questions that fuel this research have to do with the role of Chinese religion in conceptions of Chinese identity in the Philippines. What is the story of the Chinese in the Philippines, and what role has Chinese religion played in that story? More broadly, what constitutes Chinese identity according to received scholarship?

Limitations of time demanded that I focus on a particular aspect of Chinese religion in the Philippines, and I chose to focus on Chinese Buddhism because of my personal background and experience of it. Even with this chosen focus, the research still involved visiting thirty-seven temples. There are at least as many Daoist or folk temples throughout the country.

How can Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines be described? What is its history and present reality? How is it linked to the development of Chinese Buddhism in China, Taiwan, and elsewhere? In what ways did it have to adapt to a Christian environment, religiously and socially? What role did it play in the life of the ethnic Chinese?

Just as Buddhism had significant religious, cultural, and social impact on China, so I venture to show how Chinese Buddhism has affected religion, culture, and society in an overseas Chinese community.

Survey of literature

There is a growing body of literature on the overseas Chinese, as evidenced by the activities of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas (ISSCO)[12] that organizes regular conferences. An academic journal is dedicated to the topic, the Journal of Chinese Overseas.

Limiting the focus to Southeast Asia, there are solid studies of the Chinese in this region, e.g., Suryadinata (1995, 1997) and Lee G.K. (2006). Yen (1981) provides a perspective on the overseas Chinese from the Qing dynasty (1644–

1912) onward, while McKeown (2006) focuses on the period from 1842–1949.

Chan K.B. (2004), Lee (2006), Tan C.B. (2001), Tong (2006), and Wang G.W. (2006) have published on the Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore. Tobias (1977), Elder (1982), and Formoso (1996) explore Chinese ethnicity in Thailand. Rigg (2003) deals with Thailand as well as Vietnam. Hoon (2008) has focused on the Chinese in Indonesia.

Teresita Ang-See (1990, 1997, 2004) has written most prolifically on the Chinese in the Philippines in contemporary times, while Felix (1966, 1969), Wickberg (1965), Wilson (2004), and Chu (2010) deal with the earlier periods dating back to the 16th century.

In the literature on the overseas Chinese, the most relevant to this study are those that deal explicitly with Chinese religion in the Chinese diaspora. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the practice of Chinese Buddhism in Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia. Suryadinata (2005) is my main source for Indonesia, supplemented by the unpublished work of Hudaya Kandahjaya.

Buddhism in Singapore has received more scholarly attention. I refer to the historical works of Wee (1976), Ling (1993), and Choong (2002). Tong (2002) examines the role of religion in the study of Singapore society. Kuah Pearce (2008) describes the contemporary growth of “Reformist” Buddhism in Singapore and its partnership with the government in carrying out welfare activities.

For Malaysia, the work of Nagata (1994) and DeBernardi (2002) are especially relevant for the history and contemporary development of Buddhism. Liow (1989) discusses developments that date back to the mid-19th century.

There are more general materials on Chinese religions in these countries. Among these are Clammer (1983), Cheu (1993), Choong (2002), DeBernardi (2001, 2002), and Tan C.B. (1995). Topley (1954, 1956, 1961) has classic studies on Chinese religious institutions in Singapore, while Tong (2002) provides more recent information and analysis. Fromson-Aasen and Aasen (2000) convincingly argue for a strong link between Chinese temples and Chinese identity in Bali.

Further afield, some studies have focused on Chinese temples as centers for cultural preservation. For example, Lin (1996) studied the work of Foguangshan , the Taiwan-based international organization promoting Humanistic Buddhism[13]

in Southern California. Chen (2002) studied the Chinese ethnic dimension in the work of a Chinese temple and a Chinese Christian Church, both in California. Liu (2010) worked on Chinese Buddhist temple communities in Canada as examples of the global transformation of Chinese Buddhism. I will say more about these and other examples in Chapter 6.

Focusing on materials on the Chinese in the Philippines, I have referred earlier to the work of Ang-See, but there has not been any in-depth treatment of Chinese religion in the country. The syncretism of Chinese religions with Catholicism has been described only as a force for unity between Chinese and Filipinos (Ang-See 1997, 56), but I aim to demonstrate that syncretism, as a characteristic of Chinese religion, is precisely what makes it a strong marker of Chinese identity. Teresita Ang-See and I have an article that provides an overview of Chinese religions in the Philippines (Dy and Ang-See, 2015) and uses the analysis of syncretism presented in Chapter 4 of this book.

To carry out my task, I am focusing on Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines as my gateway to Chinese religion in the country. On this topic, there are sparse materials available. The most comprehensive is Shi Chuanmiao's (2008) master's thesis written in Chinese that documents the history of thirty-seven temple communities, without providing much analysis. Wang R.G. (1990) has a brief presentation in Chinese of the propagation of Fujianese Buddhism in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Seng Guan Temple (Xinyuan Si), the oldest Buddhist temple in the Philippines, published its own history along with a very general history of Buddhism in the country (Shi Chuanyin, 1989). This slim volume has the text in both Chinese and English. Yu Lupo (1997) provides short biographies of some Buddhist missionaries who served in the Philippines.

Given my aim of linking Chinese religion, by way of Chinese Buddhism, to conceptions of Chinese identity, works that explore the relationship between religion and ethnic identity are also relevant. Duara (1988) explores the symbolic meanings attached to Guandi, the Chinese God of War, and how these represent Chinese culture; Dell'Orto (2001) studied the place of the territorial deity Tudigong () in Taiwanese life and culture; Connolly (2009) studied Christianity in East Kalimantan as it related to Indonesian identity; Song (2011) demonstrates how a Chinese religion impacts on Chinese identity in Singapore.

On the theoretical side, Rutledge (1985), Clarke (2000), Kokot et al. (2004), and Clammer (2009) specifically highlight the strong relationship between religion and identity in different diaspora communities. These authors follow the earlier theories laid down by Lewins (1978) and Mol (1976), which I will employ in Chapter 6. The work of Wang L.L. (1991) and Chan K.B. (2004) on modern conceptions of Chinese identity will also be especially useful in Chapter 6.

Chandler (1998, 2004, 2005), when he discusses Foguangshan's approach of linking Buddhism to Chinese identity, supports the connection I make between Chinese Buddhism and Chinese ethnic identity.

Finally, syncretism is a theme I discuss substantially in Chapter 4. DeBernardi (2009) describes syncretic processes in the contemporary Chinese practice of folk religion and Christianity. Stewart and Shaw (1994), Leopold and Jensen (2004), and Stewart and Strathern (2007) theorize different aspects of the syncretic process, such as the ruptures in religion or the politics of religious synthesis. Goh (2009) edited a special volume of the Asian Journal of Social Science dedicated to the topic and describes it as a part of everyday religiosity in Asia. These theoretical approaches to syncretism are especially relevant to this book, especially Pye's (1971, 1994) historical development of syncretism as a tool in the study of religions.

Syncretism in Chinese religions has been the subject of historical and anthropological studies. Berling (1980), Brook (1993b), and Dean (1998) have focused studies of specific syncretic cults in China. More generally, syncretism as a dimension of Chinese religion is discussed in studies of Chinese religion, such as Yang C.K. (1961), Freedman (1974), Watson (1985), Feuchtwang (1991, 2001, 2010), and Yao and Zhao (2010).

In summary, while the study of the Chinese overseas is a growing field of study, and focused research on Chinese religions in such communities have begun in other countries of Southeast Asia, there is still a big gap in this area as far as the Philippines is concerned. The published materials provide useful information, but because the authors are Buddhist monastics (Shi Chuanmiao and Shi Chuanyin), there is perhaps a hesitation on their part to be more critical.

Given this context, I am in a position to provide more analysis of the role played by Chinese Buddhism in the story of the Chinese in the Philippines, and for this I can draw from existing literature on religion, Chinese identity, and syncretism.

This book not only provides comprehensive historical data on Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines for the first time in English, but also analyzes the religious, cultural, and social dimensions of Chinese Buddhism in the country, especially its role as a marker of Chinese identity.

Methodology

For ten months from August 2010 to May 2011, I did my fieldwork in the Philippines, visiting thirty-seven Chinese Buddhist temples and seven Buddhist schools, and talking to various informants. Armed with a list I had compiled over the previous two years, I began visiting the schools and temples, getting acquainted with their history, facilities, and present activities. I began in Manila but eventually traveled north and south of the country in order to visit all the temples in the list. In 2015, to prepare for the publication of this book, I updated the information in Chapters 2 and 5 by way of telephone calls and visits.

More often than not, I found people in my social network who could introduce me to the authorities in each place, and this tremendously eased my access. Once there, and speaking in Mandarin or in the Hokkien dialect that is predominant among the Philippine-Chinese, I was shown much kindness and hospitality. My ability to speak Hokkien and Mandarin opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed. For the most part, I used Hokkien, using Mandarin only with the monastics from China who did not speak Hokkien.

I looked into the history and present practice of these institutions, treating the information as “texts” that I then sought to study historically and analytically. I also explored the personal views and practices of my informants, paying particular attention to the role of religion in the assertion of Chinese ethnic identity.

Although there are historical and anthropological dimensions to this research, I view it as a contribution to Buddhist Studies specifically, and more generally to Chinese Studies and Religious Studies. The scope of the research was limited to Chinese Buddhism, but the broader field of Chinese religion was always in the background because of the syncretic practices that I observed in the temples.

Further, Chinese Buddhists combined these syncretic practices with some form of popular Catholicism, thus expanding the commonplace understanding of syncretism in Chinese religions. In Chapter 4, I will analyze these practices in terms of adaptation and identity.

Key terms

To avoid misinterpretation and to provide more clarity in my use of key terms, let me describe my understanding and use of some terms that occur throughout the study.

In this book, I use overseas Chinese and diaspora Chinese interchangeably to refer to contemporary Chinese people living outside China whose Chinese identity is constantly being negotiated and constructed in their locales, with or without a strong attachment to China. I am referring specifically to the Chinese in the Philippines, where different generations of ethnic Chinese have different self-understandings about Chineseness but nevertheless self-identify as Chinese. I am aware of the contemporary debates surrounding the definition of the term diaspora, which is acknowledged as originally referring to the Jews with their experience of displacement and exile over thousands of years (Safran, 2004). In contemporary usage, however, the term can refer to a wide range of ethnic groups, from those exiled from their homelands (diaspora-as-exile) to those who experience fluidity and multiplicity in the dislocations of modernity (diaspora-as-diversity) (McKeown 2006; Cohen 1997). I use the term in the latter sense when I refer to the Chinese in the Philippines. The Chinese in the country, as elsewhere, do not necessarily see themselves as being in any kind of exile. They negotiate the meaning of being Chinese while being firmly rooted in their adopted country.

Related to the concept of diaspora are those of nation and nationalism, which I refer to in the first chapter. As Wang Gungwu (2002, 23–49) has noted, the idea of nation or nation-state was alien to Asia until the 20th century. Until the peoples of Asia were confronted with the desire to be free from Western colonialism, there was no need to formally assert national identities. States, or kingdoms demanding tribute from others had existed for centuries. Ethnic

groups with unique cultures existed as well, but in the anti-colonial movements of the 20th century, various states and ethnic groups began to see themselves in larger units, or as nation-states. It is in this particularly 20th-century sense that I use the term nation, and the concomitant love for, and loyalty to, the nation as nationalism. In the Chinese context, especially for the Chinese diaspora, China as a nation born after the Communist ascendancy in 1949 is further distinguished from China as a civilization with thousands of years of history and culture. In the first chapter, I will elaborate further on Chinese civilization as the common denominator shared by Chinese people everywhere.

I use Chinese religions in the plural when referring to Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, or a combination of all three, and the singular when referring to a broader concept of Chinese religion. This will be discussed initially in the first chapter, and again in the fourth and final chapters. This book links any practice of Chinese religion or religions to Chinese identity. As mentioned earlier, my analysis relates directly to Chinese Buddhism due to constraints of time and resources, but the analysis can hold true for Chinese religions as well.

I shall use the terms popular or folk religion interchangeably in this book, using Overymyer's (1976, 2) definition of folk Buddhist religion as "lay-based, heterodox, and radically syncretic."

I use the term "religion" as an anthropological rather than theological term, following the definition of Jonathan Smith (1978, 281) and Melford Spiro: an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings (Spiro 1966, 96). Applied to Chinese religion as a broad category, this definition will encompass ancestors and the numerous cosmological and historical deities in the Chinese pantheon, approached syncretically for both worldly and otherworldly benefits.

As a working definition at this stage, I am using syncretism to mean the simultaneous practice of elements from different religious traditions, regardless of one's formal religious affiliation. Scholars in religious studies once viewed this loose mixing of elements from different religions very negatively, but in Chapter 4, I will present the history of the term and its recovery in religious studies as a potent tool in the study of religions. Today, syncretism can be viewed as a step in a wider process, rather than an end in itself.

Related to syncretism is the relationship between a religion and the local cultures

that it engages. Buddhism adapted to China in a process that can be called inculturation or accommodation, but these terms are actually borrowed from Christianity. Byrne (1990) traces the history of the terms as used in the Catholic Church. He cites the distinction made by other authors such as Standaert (1994) between adaptation or accommodation, which refer to the process of utilizing local languages and cultural symbols to make religious truths (the Christian Gospel) intelligible; and inculturation, which is the local people's active process of expressing the religion (e.g., Christian Gospel) in new ways within the culture.[14] The Church uses the term inculturation to encompass both making religion intelligible by adapting to local culture and creating a new synthesis within the culture. In this book, I will have occasion to refer to Christian inculturation among the Chinese people as a work in progress.

Applied to the transformation of Buddhism in China, adaptation or accommodation refers to the translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese to make it intelligible to the Chinese, but the new synthesis that is Chinese Buddhism is the result of a process of inculturation, where Buddhism has been expressed within Chinese conceptions of the soul and the value of honoring parents, among others. This process is described in greater detail in Chapter 3. Given this understanding of inculturation, the root word culture is given a broad meaning here, as can be found in Tylor's classic definition: that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [sic] as a member of society.[15]

What do I mean by identity? Beginning in the mid-1990s, the concept of identity has been theorized anew by many scholars, and there is a consensus against essentialist models that neatly pin down what constitutes a certain identity. Stuart Hall identifies three moments in the understanding of identity, from the Enlightenment subject who is a fully centered, unified, essential individual, to the socially constructed self of modernity, to the postmodern subject who is composed of several identities that are constantly in flux (Hall 1992, 275–277). The postmodern identity or conception of self is fluid, formed, and transformed through interaction with the cultural systems that surround a person.

Hall also shows how the concept of identity has been deconstructed in different disciplinary areas, but acknowledges as well the continued use of the concept as a category in flux (Hall 1996a). To give concrete form to his work, he examines the experience of black people in British society and how their ethnicity is constructed by historical, political, and cultural factors (Hall 1996b).

In this book, I use the concept of identity in cultural terms. Applying the contemporary insight about fluid identities to the understanding of Chinese ethnic identity, Chapter 1 will explore how the idea of Chinese identity has developed from essentialist notions to locally mediated self-understandings of Chineseness.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 1 is devoted to a brief history of the Chinese in the Philippines, with a particular focus on Chinese identity throughout that history. In this chapter, I will also elaborate further on the notions of Chinese religion and identity, as these are key terms that will recur throughout the book.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the data I collected during fieldwork. This will provide a general history of how Chinese Buddhism came to the Philippines, its present reality, and information on temples and schools throughout the country. I evaluate the impact of Chinese Buddhism on the Chinese Filipino community, and explore future scenarios for it. While it has played a significant role in preserving Chinese ethnic identity for early generations of migrants, there are signs that it is evolving into something more native, a Filipino brand of Buddhism that is rooted in the Chinese Mahayana tradition.

Chapter 3 discusses Buddhism as a Chinese religion, emphasizing how Buddhism was transformed in China and how its practice contributed to its development into an indigenous religion. The chapter will also present Chinese Buddhism in contemporary China, Taiwan, and selected overseas communities in Southeast Asia as the broader background of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines.

Chapter 4 focuses on the religious and social dimensions of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines. A key dimension is the religious texts I found in the field, whether these are sutras or devotional pieces. I provide a context for these texts by examining their history and describing their adaptation to the Philippines. This presentation will involve introductions to sacred Buddhist texts and the particular devotional emphasis on Guanyin . I provide a discussion of syncretism

as a religious phenomenon observed among the Chinese in the Philippines, describing it as a dynamic process rather than simply an unconscious selectivity in religious practice. I will present the adaptation of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippines as reflected in the use of texts and the practice of rituals as instances of adaptation and preservation of Chinese identity.

Chinese Buddhism is not only a religious tradition. It is also a social force in education, culture, and charitable works. In Chapter 5, I present the educational, cultural, and charitable works of Chinese Buddhist institutions in the Philippines and again contextualize them in larger traditions of overseas Chinese organizations and Buddhist expressions of compassion. Buddhist work in education is especially linked to the maintenance of Chinese identity.

I turn in Chapter 6 to a more thematic analysis of religion and Chinese identity. I use Hans Mol's "sacralization of identity" as a model for understanding the relationship between Chinese religion and Chinese ethnic identity. I then proceed to explore typologies of being Chinese, Filipino, and Buddhist, showing that these are fluid ethnocultural and religious identities that are projected based on the context. I also ask what kind of identity Chinese Buddhist institutions tend to promote.

I conclude the book by discussing multiple religious belonging as the consequence of religious syncretism, so much a part of the Chinese approach to religion. It is syncretism in practice, which I observed in the Philippines, that could be the defining element of Chinese religion and that could also be the religious component of Chinese identity in the 21st century.

1 Hokkien term for paternal grandfather

2 Hokkien for paternal grandmother

3 A vertical, wooden token about twelve inches high, inscribed with the name and other details of the deceased. These tablets are kept at a dedicated hall in Chinese temples and prayers are offered for the deceased at regular times of

the year. Chapter 4's section on funerary texts has a more detailed description of beliefs and practices related to the spirit tablet.

4 This effort led to what became known as the Chinese Rites Controversy. For a book-length treatment, see George Minamiki, The Chinese Rites Controversy, from Its Beginning to Modern Times (Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1985). For a study of late imperial Christianity as an "inculturated" religion in China, see Laamann (2006).

5 http://www.catholic.org.tw/theology/public/liyi/topics_ancestor.html (last accessed 27 March 2015) is an article in Chinese by Qian Lingzhu that explains the history of ancestor veneration in the Catholic Church and includes an explanation of the ancestor veneration rite approved by the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference in Taiwan in 1974. See also Wang (2001), esp. p. 37 ff., for a discussion of Christianity in modern Taiwan.

Examples of Chinese Christian art can be found at http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci//collection/exhibits/celestialicons/index.htm (last accessed 9 August 2012), website of the Ricci Institute at the University of San Francisco. The site refers to other libraries in Rome and Germany where other Chinese Christian artworks are kept. For a study of efforts at inculturation through architecture and Christian art in China in the early 20th century, see Sergio Ticozzi PIME, "Celso Constantini's Contribution to the Localization and Inculturation of the Church in China," Tripod 28, no. 148 (2008), http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/en/tripod_en/en_tripod_148_03.html (last accessed 27 March 2015).

6 I served as national secretary for the Catholic Chinese-Filipino Apostolate from 2004 to 2008, and also wrote a history of this apostolate (Dy 2005, 33–49).

7 Syriac Christianity entered China in the 7th century CE, and European Christianity in the 16th century.

8 The sinification of Buddhism is a theme I will discuss in the third chapter, but for the overarching topic of Buddhism in China, see: Chen's Buddhism in China (1964) surveys the history of Buddhism's development in China from the Han dynasty to the modern period. He notes the many ways by which Buddhism adapted to the Chinese environment, and focuses on this latter topic in a later (1973) work, The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism. Zürcher's The Buddhist Conquest of China (1959) focuses on the same adaptation during the early medieval period until the 5th century, and Gernet (1995) provides an economic history of Chinese Buddhism from the sixth to the tenth centuries. For surveys of Chinese Buddhism in modern times, see the relevant chapters in Wing-tsit Chan (1953) and C.K. Yang (1961). Holmes Welch (1967, 1968, 1972) provides a detailed treatment of the 20th century, which I will also discuss in Chapter 3.

9 Xinzhong Yao and Yanxia Zhao (2010, 2–3) make this point in Chinese Religion: A Contextual Approach, where they highlight the religious dimension of Chinese identity and culture.

10 For a discussion of religion and culture as inseparable analytical concepts, see Fitzgerald (1997).

11 Yao and Zhao (2010, 2–3) have made this point as well.

12 More information can be found at http://issco.info/ (last accessed 27 March 2015).

13 Humanistic Buddhism is a free translation of renjian fojiao , a contemporary form of Chinese Buddhism inspired by the vision of Master Taixu (1890–1947) and which flourished in Taiwan. It seeks to make Buddhism

relevant to daily life and the concerns of society rather than a spiritual practice for personal enlightenment only. It is related to but distinct from the Engaged Buddhism associated with the Vietnamese monk Thic Nhat Hanh and other Buddhist reformers in the 20th century. In Chapter 4, I relate Humanistic Buddhism to Socially Engaged Buddhism, referring to the work of Winston King (1994), Stuart Chandler (2004), and Sallie King (2009).

14 Standaert (1994) is the Philippine edition of his work on inculturation.

15 Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture [New York: J.P. Putnam's Sons , 1920 (1871)], 1. I use his classic definition because of his work as an anthropologist of religion best known for his propagation of the term "animism."

CHAPTER ONE

Being Chinese in the Philippines

A Preliminary Discussion of History and Culture

Before I present the history of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, it is important to establish some contexts by briefly presenting the history of the Chinese in the Philippines and providing an initial consideration of Chinese religion and identity. As I will shortly demonstrate, there are many layers to these ideas, and these must be kept in mind as the book progresses.

Brief history of the Chinese in the Philippines

Long before the Spanish colonization of the Philippine islands (16th to 19th centuries), the Chinese had been trading with the native peoples of what became known as the Philippines. Chinese sources from the Song Dynasty (960–1279) make reference to parts of the northern island of Luzon.[1] Trade relations go back to the 9th century (Ang-See 2005, 20). Chinese sources from the 14th century record seasonal trade relations, and two Philippine kingdoms are recorded as paying tribute to the Ming court (1368–1644) (Wilson 2004, 42–43). Though unsuccessful, there was also an early Ming attempt by the Chinese explorer Zheng He to include the northern Philippines in the Ming Empire (Wang G.W. 1992, 96).

There was, therefore, a free flow of people and goods for several centuries before Spanish colonization. It was only during the more than three centuries of colonial rule, when the Spanish central government took possession of the islands, that identities began to be highlighted.

Andrew Wilson (2004) wrote his doctoral dissertation on the ambition of the Philippine-Chinese merchant elite as a force in the formation of Chinese political identity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While his focus was on the strategies employed by Chinese economic elites in the Philippines to preserve their position in the country, especially during the revolutionary chaos at the turn of the 20th century, the context he establishes is helpful for our consideration of Chinese identity in the Philippines. Following Wickberg (1965, 1997), Wilson describes the history of relations between the Philippines and China, highlighting the experiences of the Chinese in the Philippines and Spanish attitudes and policies toward them. In order to better understand the role of Chinese Buddhism in the formation of Chinese identity in the Philippines in the 20th century, I want to first lay down the history of that identity in the Philippine context.[2]

In the late 16th century, Chinese trade with Southeast Asia became lucrative due to the interest of European colonists in oriental goods. Chinese merchants seized this opportunity and braved the hardships of traveling through the South China Sea, establishing Manila as a major trading post for the Chinese. Before Spanish

arrival in Manila, the Chinese there numbered only a few hundred, but this number grew to 20,000 by 1603 and ironically, the Chinese in Manila vastly outnumbered the Spanish (Wickberg 1965, 6; Wilson 2004, 35).

In exchange for Mexican silver, the Spanish bought Chinese goods such as silk, porcelain, and tea through Chinese middlemen in Manila. Unlike the Portuguese and the Dutch who had their own trading posts on Chinese soil,[3] the Spanish traded with China by way of Manila, and the volume of this trade proved to be immensely significant for both the Spanish and Chinese economies of the time. The Chinese traders in Manila were crucial to these commercial exchanges. There were always Chinese who were happy to travel frequently between Manila and the southern Chinese coast (Guangdong and Fujian , but mostly the latter), but there were also those who decided to settle in Manila.

In time, not only traders but also skilled Chinese laborers arrived in Manila, welcomed by the Spanish for their skills and the continuation of trade with China. The relationship between the Spanish and the Chinese, however, was never harmonious. While there was always a mutually beneficial economic relationship, Spain was a conquering colonizer after all and had reason to doubt the attitudes of the Chinese toward them, the native Filipinos,[4] and the Chinese empire. Mutual misunderstandings caused by false assumptions led to periodic outbreaks of violence, including the Chinese massacres of 1603 and 1639, each of which claimed more than 20,000 Chinese lives.[5]

The Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1912) that succeeded the Ming did not seem to value trade with Southeast Asia as much as the Ming.[6] The new dynasty was severely distrustful of foreigners, segregating them in enclaves in Canton (present-day Guangzhou), and forbidding Chinese emigration (Wilson 1998, 73). Sino-Spanish trade in Manila declined for some time, until the mid-19th century when European commercial and military might have forced China to engage with European powers again. Concurrently, Spanish in the Philippines also wanted to increase trade with China.

Trade in the region beyond the Sino-Spanish link also had an impact on migration to the Philippines. Fujian, being a mountainous region, traded more with Southeast Asia than with the rest of China. The South Fujianese coastal cities of Quanzhou , Jinjiang , and Xiamen were bustling ports of maritime trade from the 16th century onward,[7] and these economic links were accompanied by migration to Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and other parts of Southeast Asia

(Chu 2012, 27–30). By the late 19th century, British rule in Hong Kong opened up another port and a triangular link was established through direct steamship services between Xiamen, Hong Kong, and Manila (Chu 2012, 27–30, 33). The flow of people and goods in the region gave the Chinese sojourners ample opportunities to survive in diverse circumstances.

For most of the Spanish period, in order to control the Chinese in the Philippines, the Spanish policy toward them consisted of three elements: taxation, segregation, and conversion (Wilson 2004, 39).

The Spanish colonial administration was always understaffed and relied heavily on the local elite, giving them administrative roles in exchange for benefits. It was a system that was familiar to the Chinese, who accepted the authority of the Chinese elite that collected various taxes and imposed social order on behalf of the Spanish powers.

To control the mobility of the Chinese, they were required to live in enclaves called Parian and there were limits imposed on their movements. Only the Chinese who accepted baptism were allowed to reside outside the enclave, for fear that the unbaptized would "pollute" the natives with their pagan ideas and hinder the development of Catholicism. By segregating the Chinese, trade was also localized (Wilson 2004, 41).

Finally, converting the Chinese to the Catholic faith was seen as a way to simultaneously gain new Christians who were loyal to Spain. A good Catholic was necessarily a good subject (Wickberg 1965, 15). Furthermore, the Church saw the conversion of the Chinese as a springboard for winning China for the faith,[8] a vision that never materialized but nevertheless motivated the Church's friendly attitude toward the Chinese.

Throughout the Spanish period spanning more than three centuries, the Chinese retained a distinct ethnic identity. Spanish policies treated them as a distinct class of persons, different from the native Filipinos, and different from the mestizos, the offspring of Chinese who had married local women. The latter, because they had become Catholic and married native women, were trusted more and were given great mobility and better terms of taxation. The Spanish encouraged this form of assimilation as it was a way to benefit from Chinese skills without the threat of possibly misplaced loyalties.[9] In the late 17th and 18th centuries, the Chinese mestizo class flourished and far outnumbered the Chinese (Chu 2010).

By the end of the 19th century, the Chinese mestizo population had reached a quarter of a million (Wickberg 1964, 79).

Meanwhile, the Chinese population in the Philippines ebbed and flowed according to the dynamics of Spanish and Qing dynasty policies. There was a crucial turning point in the middle of the 18th century when the British invaded Manila and the Chinese (but not the Chinese mestizos), hoping for more favorable economic conditions under the British, supported the unsuccessful British invasion (Wilson 2004, 49; Purcell 1965, 526–527). The result was a Spanish backlash on the Chinese. Short of executing all the Philippine-Chinese, those who collaborated with the British were instead expelled (Wickberg 1964, 86). The Chinese community in the Philippines would again increase in number only from the late 19th century (Ibid., 90), when treaty ports in the region facilitated trade from Manila to Hong Kong and Xiamen, and from Xiamen, to Taiwan and Japan (Chu 2012, 32–36).

At that time, the Chinese elite in Manila began to assert themselves as a political entity by lobbying the Qing court for a consulate in Manila, arguing that the Qing had jurisdiction over the Chinese overseas. However, this was done out of expedience and ambition rather than allegiance to the Qing.[10] In fact, the overseas Chinese in the Philippines and elsewhere supported the revolutionary forces of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and celebrated the success of the revolution in 1912.

The assertion of Chinese merchant elite leadership over the Chinese community began in the Spanish period and continued into the American and Independence periods. The leadership position in the Chinese community evolved from Gobernadorcillo (little Governor) to Consul-General to President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. But through it all, the business elite claimed to represent the interests of the Chinese community (Wickberg 1997, 169; Wilson 2004, 84, 119, 173).

Throughout the colonial era, the Chinese had a strong sense of being the Other in the Philippines. Their confinement to the Parian created physical as well as psychological experiences of being set apart from the local population. Unless one intermarried, one was always seen as a chino, a non-native who could return to China at any time and who might take advantage of the native population. The mutual suspicion among the Spanish, the Filipinos, and the Chinese resulted in the expulsions and massacres of the Chinese that marred the Spanish period, and the restrictive policies toward the Chinese of successive Philippine governments

in the mid-20th century (Wickberg 1997, 168; Tong 2010, 207). Since the granting of mass naturalization in 1974 (Ang-See 1997, 29–30), the ethnic Chinese have increasingly ventured beyond the commercial sphere, and integrated much more with Philippine society, but tensions remain as economic success made the Chinese the target of kidnapping syndicates in the 1990s.[11]

When the reform era took hold in China in the 1980s, there was a new wave of Chinese emigration to the Philippines that continues to this day, and distinguishing these new immigrants from the Chinese Filipinos who have been in the country for several generations can be quite challenging.

In the 20th century, whether they had been in the Philippines for years, or had just arrived to start a new life in the country, how did they retain their Chinese identity? Now that they ceased to live in strictly bound ethnic enclaves, what social structures linked them to their cultural identity? What factors helped them experience Chineseness in the Philippine context?

Chinese community organizations, especially those organized based on surnames or hometowns in China, could provide material aid and a link to their native place. Chinese schools and newspapers provided a platform for the Chinese language and culture to be preserved, and for pride in Chinese history and civilization to be nurtured. Chambers of commerce could grant them access to business networks. These experiences all contributed to reinforce Chinese identity, an identity that was already conditioned by the historical Otherness that had been the experience of the Chinese in the country. To use Benedict Anderson's (1991) term, the overseas Chinese could "imagine" themselves as a community even as the Philippine concept of nationhood was also being formed.

Anderson was analyzing the birth of modern nationalism, linking language, print technology, capitalism, and the colonial tools of census, map, and museum, to people's consciousness of belonging to a nation. This process would take several decades to develop in the Philippines. Filipino intellectuals studying in Europe nurtured the idea of the inhabitants of the Philippine islands constituting one nation (Schumacher 1997). This nation was born when Filipino nationalists declared independence in 1898, only to be colonized again by America. In the decades following the Second World War, the country began the long and difficult task of nation building, which many people still consider to be a work in progress.

Meanwhile, the overseas Chinese sought to preserve their ethnic identity, "imagining" themselves as a Chinese "nation" living in a foreign country. Community institutions like Chinese schools, newspapers, village and kinship associations, hospitals and fire brigades, and the overall experience of Chinese enclaves like Chinatowns all indicated an orientation toward China as one's nation of origin.

Antonio Tan (1988), along with others like Teresita Ang-See (1990, 1997, 2004), have observed that the identity of the Philippine-Chinese has changed with the birth of younger generations of Chinese who have no attachment to China and see the Philippines as their own country. Their forebears, the first two generations to live in the Philippines, continued to follow political developments in China and took sides between the Communists and the Nationalists, especially when the latter established itself as a separate government in Taiwan. However, for the third generation of Chinese in the Philippines, such loyalties were alien. They were proud of being Chinese, but their sense of nation and nationalism was clearly rooted in the Philippines even if the Philippines was itself also in the process of strengthening its own sense of nationhood.

Given these generational differences in the understanding of cultural identity and nationhood, we can now return to the question of religion's role in the formation of Chinese identity.

By analyzing the development of Buddhism as a Chinese religion in the Philippines, I argue that participation in temple life was and still can be a potent way of experiencing one's Chineseness. As part of the context of this study, an introduction to Chinese religion and identity as multi-layered concepts is in order.

Chinese religion

In the Introduction, I began to say that Chinese religion is a broader concept than Chinese Buddhism—in fact broader than the syncretism of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Up until the 1950s, Chinese religion was traditionally defined as the integration of these three teachings (sanjiao), but scholarship has since acknowledged the limitations of this approach.[12] The propitiation of heavenly bodies and powers in the natural world, divination, exorcism, and the proper care of ancestors and ghosts, for example, were practiced in China long before these three traditions appeared on the scene.[13] In ancient China there was already an understanding of extra-human forces affecting human life in practical ways.

Arthur Wolf (1974) and Stephan Feuchtwang (1991, 2001) wrote modern classics describing some key characteristics of Chinese religion such as the hierarchy of gods, ghosts, and ancestors patterned after the imperial bureaucracy in China. This hierarchy of worship objects, with their corresponding ritual practices, was expanded and enriched by the Buddhist and Daoist deities that came later, demonstrating the fluidity of Chinese religion as the product of syncretic processes. In time, Confucian principles became the rationale for maintaining order and observing moral codes of conduct (Yao and Zhao 2010, 12).

It is already commonplace to say that Chinese religion cannot be limited to the overlapping aspects of the three “religions of China,” despite their unities and diversities. The fourth element from ancient Chinese religion is conventionally called popular or folk religion, for indeed, before religious specialists came along, ordinary Chinese people had their own ways of honoring the dead and relating with the universe through a free mixture of beliefs and practices.

In contrast to popular practice is the elite, text-based practice that came with the institutionalization of religion. These two levels of practice have been described as Great and Little, or elite and peasant (Redfield 1956, 70), institutional and diffused (Yang C.K. 1961, 294ff.), and official and popular (Yao and Zhao 2010, 17).

In this book, the point I wish to make is that Chinese religion, as an older and broader category than the three traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and

Daoism, embodies a particular Chinese religiosity that makes it a marker of Chinese identity.

Since the concept of Chinese religion is very broad, I use field data on Chinese Buddhism to show how it is a marker of Chinese identity, but the link to Chinese religion is never lost. In other words, I use Chinese Buddhism as part of Chinese religion to link it to Chinese cultural identity.

Chinese religion, with a focus on Buddhism, is one of two analytical themes in this book. I will elaborate further on Chinese religion in the third and sixth chapters. The other theme is Chinese identity, of which its complexity also deserves some elaboration.

Exploring the notion of Chinese identity

Identity is a recurring theme in this book, so it is essential in this first chapter to explore the term in its Chinese context, and foreground its different layers of meaning.

In the view of ordinary people, the Chinese communities found all over the world are united by a link to China, a common script (whether traditional or simplified Chinese), and pride in an ancient civilization. In Chinatowns across continents, the colorful cultural practices of the Chinese may also be observed, but these would vary from place to place. In reality, Chinese identity is a complex phenomenon that operates on many levels. For example, most of the overseas Chinese communities in the world trace their origins to the southern Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (McKeown 2006, 107). It is the Cantonese and Fujianese experiences of being Chinese that have been brought abroad, and this is expressed in their language, cuisine, and values, among others be vastly different from the experience of other Chinese regions. Further, within the Cantonese and Fujianese variants of Chineseness are more intricate differences in terms of dialects and customs. People from Hong Kong are linguistically Cantonese but their experience as inhabitants of a British colony makes them socially very different from mainland Cantonese.

Since the 1980s, Chinese migration has diversified as people from other parts of China chose to move abroad for work, study, or other concerns. There are also significant Taiwanese populations overseas and they also add to the complexity of defining Chinese identity in a globalized world. Some distinctions are necessary, therefore, as I approach the theme of religion and its place in formulations of ethnic or cultural identity.

Many people may not immediately perceive a difference between ethnic and cultural identity, but in studying the phenomenon of the Chinese overseas, there are important distinctions to be made.

First of all, Chinese ethnic identity is multilayered. The terminology used to identify the Chinese is a good way of making this explicit. The first wave of migrants from China is referred to as overseas Chinese or huaqiao , especially from the Chinese perspective. Hua is a generic reference to things Chinese, and

qiao means to emigrate while also evoking the image of a bridge (qiao). The overseas Chinese are those who were born in China and look to China as the homeland or mother country. They are sojourners who are trying their luck abroad, but they are China-oriented and would have no discomfort in being called Zhongguoren as well. This term literally means a person from China, and Zhongguo literally means the Middle Kingdom.

As the first wave of migrants settles in another country and gives birth to another generation, the sense of identity begins to shift. If the spouse in the second generation is also ethnic Chinese, then a strong Chinese identity can be preserved. If the spouse is non-Chinese, then Chinese identity can begin to dissipate. In any case, by the third generation, the primary referent for identity becomes the adopted country. There may still be a fondness for the Chinese heritage, but the younger generations will increasingly identify with the host country. In the Chinese language, such people would self-identify as huaren .[14]Ren means person, and huaren denotes a Chinese person in a generic way, without the association with China that huaqiao or Zhongguoren may connote. These nuances are easily lost in English, but they make apparent that in the study of Chinese overseas, the terms “overseas Chinese” and “ethnic Chinese” may mean very different things.[15]

What is shared by all ethnic Chinese, in China and in the Chinese diaspora, is what Tan C.B. calls a civilizational identity or ethnicity. It is a category

with which all Chinese can choose to identify but which does not involve notions of membership in a common group or community…. The civilizational ethnicity is useful as a rhetoric of association. When Chinese of different countries meet, they can identify in common as ‘Chinese,’ as Zhongguoren in the rhetoric of China and as Huaren in the rhetoric of the ethnic Chinese outside China, but with each expressing their respective national ethnic identities, such as Chinese Malaysians or Tsinoy of the Philippines” (Tan C.B. 2001, 225–226).

The complexity of Chinese ethnicity is often negotiated through language, as I have briefly shown here. But beyond language and terminology, is it possible to define what constitutes Chinese ethnicity? When Chinese people meet, as Tan

notes above, they can be very clear about belonging to their respective countries, but still there is something shared—a Chineseness or Chinese identity.

From the foregoing discussion, it is already apparent that identity is a very fluid concept. Following recent scholarship, I regard identity in non-essentialist terms. What people mean when they identify as being Chinese is very subjective. Is it belonging to a common race or ancestry, speaking a common language, sharing the same culture as indicated by beliefs, values, customs, and traditions? Is it all of these things?

Dikötter (1992) historically traces the way the concept of race has developed in Chinese discourse. This discourse began with indications in the Confucian classics that foreigners or "barbarians" were inferior to the Chinese due to their skin color and culture.[16] China and the Chinese were always the point of reference as the superior country and race, and a mythology exalting the greatness of Chinese civilization became firmly established in the Chinese consciousness. The Chinese encounter with foreigners, especially in the 18th century, occasioned a continuing discourse on the physical differences between Chinese and other races. As dynastic China came to an end in the early 20th century, the concept of "nation" as part of race was introduced and became part of ideological propaganda. Racial discourse remains a part of the Chinese symbolic universe, but it is only one of many elements that can constitute Chineseness.

Wang Gungwu prefers to limit the use of race to discussions of physical differences.[17] In The Chineseness of China, he uses the broader term "civilization," which he describes as "a complex organism that has to be understood as a whole" (Wang G.W. 1991, 2). He also notes that "what is quintessentially Chinese is the remarkable sense of continuity that seems to have made the civilization increasingly distinctive over the centuries" (Ibid.).

Wang identifies some elements of Chinese civilization that have developed historically. From the 2nd millennium BCE, there was already the idea of a "single ruler receiving tribute from all directions, an ideographic language, a religion of ancestor worship, capital cities of religious and political importance and an agricultural economy" (Ibid.). With the emergence of Confucius and his contemporary thinkers in the 5th century BCE, the civilization took form and Confucian culture developed as the state philosophy beginning with the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) onward. From outside China came the influence of

Buddhism, which Wang says “appealed to the universalist side of Confucianism and enhanced the idealism in Chinese thought” (Ibid., 4).

Interaction with tribes from China’s northern and western borders, as well as long periods of non-Han rule, further expanded the contours of Chinese civilization. The development of a common script, even if the common spoken language would take centuries to institute, provided a communication tool that facilitated the dissemination of social and political structures. Thus the Chinese script was a “primary instrument of Chinese cultural unification.”[18]

In a highly focused study, Ebrey highlights the unique Chinese system of surnames. The system is not unusual in establishing kinship by patrilineal descent, but Ebrey shows how non-Han tribes could be absorbed into Chinese civilization by assigning surnames and constructing genealogies that traced ancestry all the way back to the mythical Yellow Emperor (Ebrey 2006). Quite apart from race, language, and any sense of place and time, the Chinese surname system establishes Chineseness in a way that simply absorbs the biological and cultural consequences of a Chinese person’s lineage. Coupled with the Confucian culturalism institutionalized by the imperial bureaucracy, being Chinese meant having Chinese ancestry and observing Confucian mores.

In another study, Cohen (1994) draws out the common elements in Chinese culture that were established in imperial China and persisted before the concept of nation entered Chinese discourse in the 20th century and later attempts were made to extinguish the “old” culture. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, Cohen did fieldwork in villages in southern Taiwan, Hebei, Shanghai, and Sichuan. Despite the great distances involved, he found key features of Chinese culture that were common. Among these are a patriarchal family organization, land-based economic structures, great value attached to education in the Chinese Classics, ritual life based on Confucian ethics and filial piety, pride in the local place of origin, and the practice of some form of popular religion such as devotion to territorial deities or protector gods.

For example, marriage rituals may be subject to regional differences, but it is universal for guests at wedding feasts to make a monetary gift that helps subsidize the celebration. In another example, Cohen cites Rawski’s research on Chinese death rituals which found that the same ritual ingredients could be found in the funerals of emperors and peasants (Rawski 1988a, 1988b). The difference was only in scale. Watson (1988) also describes the process by which

standardized rituals in general, and funerary rituals in particular, became a key element in creating and maintaining a “unified Chinese culture.”

The sense of being Chinese was not only felt at the local level. Cohen notes:

A remarkable feature of late traditional[19] Chinese culture was that it linked being Chinese to a firm consciousness of participating in a nationwide system of political, social, religious, and symbolic relationships, with even localisms being transformed into statements of such relationships. (Cohen 1994, 98)

As noted earlier, the imperial bureaucracy in dynastic China was mirrored for the local people in the hierarchy of deities in popular religion.[20] Local deities and territorial gods reported to higher authorities culminating in the Jade Emperor. Part of being Chinese was therefore a consciousness of participating in the political, cultural, and social arrangement of Chinese civilization (Cohen 1994, 100), including the religious dimension.

In the 20th century, as the concept of nation took firmer hold in China and in countries with significant Chinese populations, there were attempts to create a new sense of Chinese identity. In China, both the Republican Revolution of the 1910s and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s sought to throw out everything that was “old” and create a new China based on “modern” ideals. These attempts were not successful if judged by the resurgence of traditional Chinese culture in today’s China. Among the overseas Chinese, it was precisely traditional Chinese culture that helped them assert their Chinese identity.[21]

In contemporary times, however, how is Chinese identity defined as the overseas Chinese sink roots in their adopted countries, and the mainland Chinese come to terms with a China that asserts a dominant position on the world stage? Tu Weiming proposes the concept of “cultural China” constituted by the interaction of three symbolic universes: first, mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore; second, overseas Chinese communities; and third, the international community of scholars, students, officials, journalists, and traders who provide a global forum for China-related matters (Tu 1994, viii). The “reflective minds” in these three symbolic universes collectively envision the self-consciousness of being Chinese, which is as much “an attainment as a given” (Ibid.). Such was his

observation in editing The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today where authors working in different Chinese contexts tried to articulate what Chinese identity is.

It can be said, therefore, that Chinese identity includes elements of race, ancestry, language, Confucian values and ritual life, popular religion, and social organization. All these elements, however, have become fluid realities. In Myron Cohen's words, where once there was a common Chinese culture, today the identity of "being Chinese is no longer buttressed by a firm sense of cultural participation in something Chinese," so that Chineseness has become "as much a quest as a condition" (Cohen 1994, 108).

In the quest for Chinese identity, an acknowledged sense of being Chinese is fleshed out by the cultural identity that is concretely and directly formed by local experience. This is where the distinction between ethnic and cultural identity becomes important. Wang Gungwu (2006, 24) describes the process by which the Chinese come to an awareness of belonging to a common culture:

What most Chinese identified with was the culture of their own local region, and this provided them with a strong link with the culture of a unified and larger community under the Son of Heaven. The culture had no territorial boundaries but the extended identification tied them to the civilization of the Han people that was based on various religions and philosophies, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and others, integrated by their elites into the Great Tradition. As for the Little Traditions of their local communities, these knit them closely to their own dialect groups, clan associations, kinship structures, and local temple communities.[22]

Both in China and in overseas Chinese communities, this process is at work as Chinese people live their daily lives. In Southeast Asia, the Chinese are a minority with substantial economic clout. The designation as a minority, however, can be deceptive, as when comparing the Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore, where they make up at least one-third of the total population (more than 70 percent for Singapore), and the Chinese in the Philippines or Indonesia who are only a little over one percent of their respective countries' population.[23]

The chances of meeting a Chinese from Malaysia or Singapore are much greater than that of meeting a Chinese from the Philippines or Indonesia.

Government policy towards the Chinese has a major impact in the formation of Chinese cultural identity outside of China. In Indonesia under President Suharto (1967–1998), the government imposed a policy of assimilation, banning Chinese schools and organizations, and even forcing the Chinese to adopt Malay names. Thus, Chinese language and customs were largely confined to the home (Tan 2001, 222; Hoon 2008).

In contrast, the Philippines under the American regime of the early 20th century allowed Chinese schools, organizations, and temples to function freely (Ang-See 1997, 35). Though the Chinese still kept to themselves by choice, they were free to practice their customs and traditions, preserve their language, and ultimately define the kind of Chinese that they wanted to be. Naturally, just as ethnic self-understanding evolved with the passing of the generations, so did culture, as expressed in beliefs and practices. Among younger ethnic Chinese who were educated in Christian schools, for example, there is the question of what stance to take toward Chinese popular religious practices (Ang-See 1997, 56–57).

Population size and government policy are just two factors that affect the development of a cultural identity. Economic factors, along with the unique beliefs, customs, and practices of each subethnic group (smaller linguistic or geographical units under such labels as “Cantonese” or “Fujianese”) also contribute to a sense of cultural identity. Chinese culture, appearances to the contrary, is therefore quite heterogeneous. There may be some values such as filial piety that are “universal” in the Chinese world, but the expression of such a value would vary greatly across Chinese communities.

For Chinese people, a common ethnic or civilizational identity can be shared, but cultural identity is created in particular contexts with varying Chinese elements. In my own experience, therefore, I share Chinese ethnic identity with the Chinese all over the world, but my cultural identity is defined by the particular interaction of the south Fujianese subethnic culture that my grandparents brought with them to the Philippines, with Filipino culture in Manila.

The place of religion in Chinese cultural identity

In her extensive research on the Philippine-Chinese, Teresita Ang-See has highlighted the religious syncretism of Chinese Filipinos. In a national survey, she found that 83 percent of the Chinese identified themselves as Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic (Ang-See 1997, 57). Yet she also found that religious syncretism was the norm as the Chinese Catholics continued to practice Chinese popular religion. Being Chinese, therefore, could also mean being Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist, etc. She therefore argued that religious syncretism or diversity meant that religion did not define Chineseness, because one was free to choose one's religion and even practice syncretism. As I will try to demonstrate by way of the Chinese Buddhist phenomenon in the Philippines, it is precisely Chinese religious syncretism rather than any one religion that is a marker of Chinese identity.

In other overseas Chinese contexts, religion played a more substantial role in the construction of cultural identity. I mentioned religion earlier, especially ancestor worship and popular religion, as a component of Chinese civilization. In the next chapter, I will provide examples of overseas Chinese communities where Chinese religion has been shown to contribute significantly to the expression of Chinese identity.

On the whole, notwithstanding the Philippine experience, Chinese religion among Chinese overseas can be considered a major component of Chinese culture, even if there are contemporary attempts to separate religion and culture, as can be observed in the quest for secularization in Europe and North America.[24] In those continents, there is a desire to articulate a sense of cultural identity that is divorced from the religious past and present.

In the case of the Chinese overseas, however, religion serves as a bridge toward cultural identity. I will discuss this at length in the final chapter, but to illustrate the point, I will provide one example here: The Taiwanese Buddhist movement, Foguangshan, which explicitly links Buddhism to Chinese cultural identity.

Owing to Taiwan's unique political and social environment since 1949, Buddhism flourished and has contributed a globalized form of Humanistic Buddhism, exemplified in Foguangshan. Founded in the 1960s by Xingyun (b.

1927), a charismatic monk from mainland China who was influenced by a vision of reform in Chinese Buddhism, Foguangshan has established close to a hundred centers or temples around the world that serve as cultural links to China and as promoters of Buddhism. Foguangshan's predominant membership is lay and ethnic Chinese, although people of all races are welcome to join their activities.

The fact that Foguangshan operates largely through the Chinese overseas communities means that it has attracted the devotion and commitment of Chinese (not limited to Taiwanese) all over the world. This is partly explained by one of the movement's stated methods, which is to serve as the cultural link to "China" or perhaps Chinese culture. In the new global context, Stuart Chandler even suggests that the new referent for communal identity is no longer nation and race, but religion (Chandler 2004, 304–305).

I will consider Foguangshan in greater detail in the section on Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan (Chapter 3). But to conclude this chapter, I want to call attention to the unique situation of 20th century overseas Chinese. On the one hand, there is a desire across generations to preserve Chinese identity and culture, sometimes by way of participation in Chinese temple life. On the other hand, there is also an acknowledgment from the younger generations that they may be culturally Chinese, but their idea of nationhood is directed toward the Philippines rather than China, unlike their elders who may be enmeshed in the politics of Greater China, principally the Mainland and Taiwan. The Filipino people are, in turn, still undergoing the long process of nation building after more than four centuries of colonial rule, which means that the Chinese Filipinos are really not that far behind in their concept of nationalism.

These are the creative tensions faced by the Chinese in the Philippines. Their religious practice, with its link to Chinese identity and culture, is carried out in a context of evolving understandings of the Filipino nation. In this book, I highlight the role that Chinese religion, specifically Chinese Buddhism, plays in the construction of Chinese cultural identity in the complex context of the Philippines. To do this, I focus on Chinese Buddhism as a self-contained phenomenon in an overseas Chinese community, distinct from the broader Chinese religious scene.

While the Buddhist temple authorities propagate their own vision of religious faith and practice, the devotees' reception of Buddhism is also an important perspective. The question of the relationship between Buddhism and Chinese

identity is one that I addressed to my informants. These voices will be heard in Chapters 5 and 6, and the importance accorded them flows from the insight that studies of Christian missions in China have focused too much on the perspective of missionaries rather than the local people (Zürcher 1994).[25] The same dynamic could be at play in any religion's missionary efforts, as for example, in the Chinese Buddhist monastics operating in the Philippines. Thus, it will be important to listen to what the local Chinese Buddhists themselves have to say.

In exploring the layers of meaning behind the term "Chinese identity," my objective is to use my field data on Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines to describe how Chinese Buddhism has been uniquely adapted to the Philippines, and to propose that the practice of a Chinese religion like Buddhism is simultaneously an assertion of Chinese cultural identity. In the next chapter, I will present the history of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, and profiles of their temples and schools throughout the country.

1 Teresita Ang-See's Tsinoy: The story of the Chinese in Philippine Life (2005, 24) gives a detailed history of the Chinese in the Philippines and cites the Chinese dynastic history Song Shi , making mention in 971 CE of Ma-I (Ba-I), which is believed to be either the southern Luzon island of Mindoro or Laguna de Ba-i. H. Otley Beyer (1921, 926) also dates the first reliable Chinese record of the Philippines to the late 10th century Song dynasty.

2 My historical overview of the Chinese in the Philippines relies to a great extent on Wickberg (1965) and Wilson (2004). For other sources, see Jensen (1956), Felix (1966), Purcell (1965), Weightman (1960), Filipinas (1976) and Ang-See (2005).

3 The Portuguese had Macau and the Dutch had Zeelandia (Tainan in Taiwan).

4 I refer to the native population as "Filipinos" for convenience, but a

distinct sense of inhabiting one “Filipino” nation emerged only in late 19th century Philippines. Anderson’s (1991) work on imagined communities is especially relevant to the formation of Filipino national consciousness.

5 Wilson (1998, 55ff.), in the doctoral dissertation on which his 2004 book is based, analyzes the Sino-Spanish relationship of that period by narrating the story of the joint Sino-Spanish effort to subdue the Chinese pirate Lin Feng in the 1570s, and the Chinese search for gold in Cavite in 1603. The two events significantly contributed to mutual distrust that in turn resulted in the Chinese attacks on Manila and the brutal show of Spanish force to subdue the Chinese. Horsley (1950) analyzes the roots of anti-Chinese feeling in the Philippines during the Spanish era and links it to the Spanish worldview that categorized the Chinese as “infidels.”

6 Space limitations do not permit an analysis of Qing policies of the 17th and 18th centuries in this book. To understand the way China developed during this period, see Zheng Yangwen’s China on the Sea: How the maritime world shaped modern China (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and Huang Pei’s Reorienting the Manchus: A study of Sinicization, 1583–1795 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2011).

7 See also Ng (1983) for the trade networks that grew out of Xiamen in the late 17th century

8 The Chinese who converted did so for practical purposes. Missionaries hoped that they would spread Catholicism on their frequent returns to China, but this was not the case and on the contrary, there is evidence of apostasy on the voyages to China for fear of Chinese persecution (Wickberg 1965, 15–6). Chu (2010, 147) confirms that the missionaries were looking beyond the Philippines to evangelize the Chinese, and at different points in his study of the Chinese mestizo class, discusses the role of Catholicism in the life of the Chinese.

9 See Wickberg (1964) for a study of the Chinese mestizo class. Chu (2010) writes a detailed study of Chinese mestizo families covering the period 1860–1930.

10 Wilson (2004) provides an in-depth study of this period, highlighting the ambition of the Chinese elite and the conscious formation of a Chinese identity in the Philippines.

11 Though a minority in the country, the Chinese have always been a significant driver of the Philippine economy. Wickberg (1965) and Wong (1999) trace the history of the Chinese role in the Philippine economy from 1850 to 1941. Ang-See (1997) discusses different aspects of Chinese economic success.

12 Teiser (1996, 21) makes the point that the three teachings or religions are "radically incommensurable" but this is the implication of regarding Chinese religions as a coherent unity. He also notes the absence of popular religion from such an understanding.

13 See Poo (1998) for a view of ancient Chinese religion that focuses on popular practices in regard to ghosts, ancestors, and other extra-human powers; Lagerwey and Kalinowski (2009) for a series that explores major religious phenomena in early China such as state cult, divination, burial practices, and shamanism; and Nadeau (2012), a handbook that provides a discussion of the historical development of different religious traditions in China.

14 Kuah (2000, 43) makes this same point in the context of the Chinese in Singapore.

15 In their introduction to a collection of essays on “the cultural politics of modern Chinese transnationalism,” Ong and Nonini (1997) trace the shifts in social scientific research on the Chinese overseas. They point out that the research has often focused on the “enduring Chinese cultural values” of significant economic minorities during the colonial and postcolonial eras, and assume that such communities maintain strong links and loyalties to China. It has become evident, however, that while the sense of Chinese identity is still strong among overseas Chinese, this does not necessarily include an unquestioned loyalty to China. The overseas Chinese are not a “residual China” and their identities are constructed in every time and place.

16 Dikötter is perhaps unique in tracing the relationship between skin color and civilized culture in the Chinese classics. He says that “physical composition and cultural disposition were confused in Chinese antiquity” so that all creatures living outside Chinese society were considered barbarian (1992, 3). Thus, barbarians were identified through the color of their skin or the tint of their clothes, corresponding to the five directions of the compass, white for the West, black for the North, red for the East, blue-green for the South. Yellow represented China, the center of the universe (Ibid, 5).

17 This usage is confirmed by John Hinnells in “The Study of Diaspora Religion” in A New Handbook in Living Religions, ed. John Hinnells (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997, 687) and advocates the neutral use of “ethnicity” to indicate cultural distinctiveness.

18 See Watson (1988, 13), where he describes how in funerary rituals, the soul is represented as a written name on a tablet rather than an image or a statue. A written name was thus part of the formal structure of funerary rites, which was also a tool for cultural standardization in late imperial China.

19 Cohen defines the late traditional period as the Qing dynasty, from 1644 to 1911.

20 To elaborate on what I said earlier about Chinese religion, Wolf (1974), in an influential article on “gods, ghosts, and ancestors,” shows that relating with these spirits is a way of understanding one’s social world and the cosmos. Briefly, this means that just as there are government officials, bad people or bandits, and then family, so there is also a hierarchy in the spirit world and the hierarchy is recognized in the rituals that are appropriate to each class. Feuchtwang (2001) calls this the imperial metaphor in Chinese popular religion. In dynastic China, the imperial bureaucracy from the emperor down to the local officials was organized under the assumption that they had the mandate of Heaven. At each level, there were duties and roles that had to be observed, lest the mandate is lost and the dynasty falls. The hierarchy in the spirit world is a metaphor for the social organization of family and government. This is why gods are depicted as wearing the robes of officials, and military guards attend to them.

21 Chinese identity was asserted in overseas Chinese communities in a variety of ways, often depending on government policy toward this ethnic group. Chang-Yau Hoon (2008) looks at how Chinese identity was negotiated in Indonesia during and after the Suharto regime. Lee Guan Kin (2006) compiles articles on how Chinese ethnicity is demarcated in the “new” nations of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. For the Philippines, Ang-See (1990, 1997, 2004) and Wickberg (1998) provide ample indicators of the various ways Chinese culture has been transmitted.

22 Deploying the classic categories introduced by Robert Redfield (1956), Wang refers to elite culture as embodied in texts and institutions as the Great Tradition, and to the popular practices of the masses as the Little Tradition. The Great Tradition is shared across Chinese civilization, while the Little Tradition is localized. I will use this framework again when I discuss the adaptation of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippines in Chapter 4.

23 See Note 21 for references to studies on the Chinese in Southeast Asia. For the Philippines, the figure of one percent comes from Ang-See (1997, 40).

24 For an introduction to the themes of secularism and the process of secularization, see Jakobsen and Pellegrini (2008), and Bruce (2002).

25 There are other studies focused on giving voice to the recipients rather than the missionaries, especially in the history of Christianity in China. See for example, Standaert (1995) for a study of a 17th century lay Chinese student of theology's approach to the Chinese translations for "God" that focused on the similarities between the Confucian terms Tian and Shangdi and the new term introduced by the missionaries, Tianzhu .

Costa (1988) acknowledges many cultures practicing one faith as he discusses inculturation, indigenization, and contextualization as different models of linking religion to culture. His edited volume also offers examples of contextualized Christian theology in contexts as diverse as Cuba, Cameroon, and the United States.

CHAPTER 2

Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines

History and present reality

In the first chapter, we saw how Chinese people traded in the Philippine islands from as early as the 9th century CE. Some scholars presume that the Chinese who did so were Buddhists (Hunt 1987, 258), but it seems more likely that they practiced what is today regarded as Chinese popular religion.[1]

It is generally believed that Buddhist temples in the Philippine islands were built only during the American period (1898–1946) in the early 20th century, but a 1953 source dates the Hoc Chuan Temple (Fuquan Si) in Zamboanga City, southern Philippines, to 1881, and there is passing mention of two temples opening in Manila in 1889.[2] While it may seem unlikely that the Spanish authorities who Christianized the islands would allow the construction of "pagan" temples (Beyer 1921, 925), the end of the 19th century was in fact a time when Spain had concluded that their strategy of assimilating the Chinese by converting them to Christianity had been a failure. In fact, the Chinese, previously classified as baptized or non-baptized, began to be documented as either "transient" or "resident" (Wickberg 1965, 190). The Spanish authorities' declining interest in converting the Chinese helps explain why Chinese temples could be built in the 1880s.

Due to the Spanish policy of segregation, the Chinese, especially those who did not become Christians, were able to preserve their religious customs and traditions in the privacy of their homes. Although there were no temples for most of the Spanish period, certain families would welcome friends and neighbors to make offerings and prayers at the shrines they had put up in their homes (Shi Chuanyin 1990, 9). The community of Hoc Chuan Temple in Zamboanga was, in fact originally, organized in this manner (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 192).

Moving forward to the American period, a master's thesis completed in 1957 outlines the Buddhist temples existing at that time (Sycip 1957, 20). From Sycip's research, corroborated by later sources (Shi Chuanyin 1990, 9; Ashiwa and Wank 2005, 227; Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 105ff), it is known that in 1931, Wu Jiangliu and Wang Zhenwen founded the Guanyin Tong (Guanyin Tang) in Manila, and offered the former's family shrine for common worship around the image of Guanyin. They and their fellow Buddhists formed the Chinese-

Buddhist Society of the Philippines and purchased land on Narra Street for the purpose of building a temple. The Seng Guan Temple (Xinyuan Si) was built in 1937, and the Venerable Xingyuan (1889–1962) was invited to come from Xiamen to serve as the congregation's first abbot. He is considered the originator of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, since formal Buddhist teaching through the sangha (monastic community) began only with his arrival, whereas all the efforts prior to his arrival can be considered folk Buddhism.[3]

The small Buddhist community in Cabanatuan, a city north of Metro Manila, invited Xingyuan to give them a Dharma talk in 1938, and on that occasion, fifteen lay persons took refuge[4] under him. Since their Guanyin shrine was no longer adequate, they built the Ling Hong Vihara[5] (Lingfeng Jingshe) and asked Xingyuan to be the non-resident abbot (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 157).

The Seng Guan Temple survived the war, but not a fire in 1949 that gutted the temple's wooden buildings. The fire did not damage the large statues of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and this was considered miraculous by the devotees, who then spent the next two years building a sturdier concrete structure (Ibid., 106). More buildings were constructed in the succeeding years, by which time Xingyuan had invited several more monks from South Fujian to join him in Manila.

Xingyuan was abbot until 1948, when he asked Ruijin (1905–2005) to take over as abbot and he concentrated on building the Hwa Chong Temple (Huazang Si) in Malabon, which opened in 1953 (Ibid., 110).

In the succeeding years, more temples were built in Manila and Chinese communities in other parts of the country followed suit. Temples were built in Bacolod, Baguio, Cebu, and Davao, among other places. In major cities like Manila, Cebu, and Davao, there is more than one temple due to the desire of particular monastics or lay Buddhists to found new temples which would naturally be independent of existing ones. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the temples throughout the country.

All the temples are privately funded by benefactors in the Chinese community. It is not uncommon for benefactors to support more than one temple community because of personal ties that they may have with the monastics. Many of the temples list the names of their benefactors with a metal marker in the temple premises.

There has been freedom of religion in the Philippines since the American period, and being very apolitical, the temple communities have operated without government interference. The only exception is the period of martial rule (1972–1984), when all publishing activities in the country were curtailed, and some Buddhist publications ceased operations.[6] On the whole, the temples maintain friendly relations with the government, as evidenced by visits that various officials have made to the temple communities.[7]

The monastics at these temples are all ordained in China or Taiwan, so ordination certificates are issued abroad rather than in the Philippines. In the last few years, Foguangshan monastics have secured government licenses to authorize them to solemnize marriages at their temples. Just like the government's arrangement with the Christian churches, marriages solemnized in religious settings also constitute a legal marriage. To my knowledge, only the Foguangshan monastics at the Mabuhay Temple have made this arrangement with the government.

The following table lists the Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines in the order of their foundation. The timing of each temple's establishment, and the personality of the founder provide some clues as to the circumstances surrounding the birth of new communities. Some notes are provided at the bottom of the table to help make sense of the list, and a general discussion of the temples follows the table.

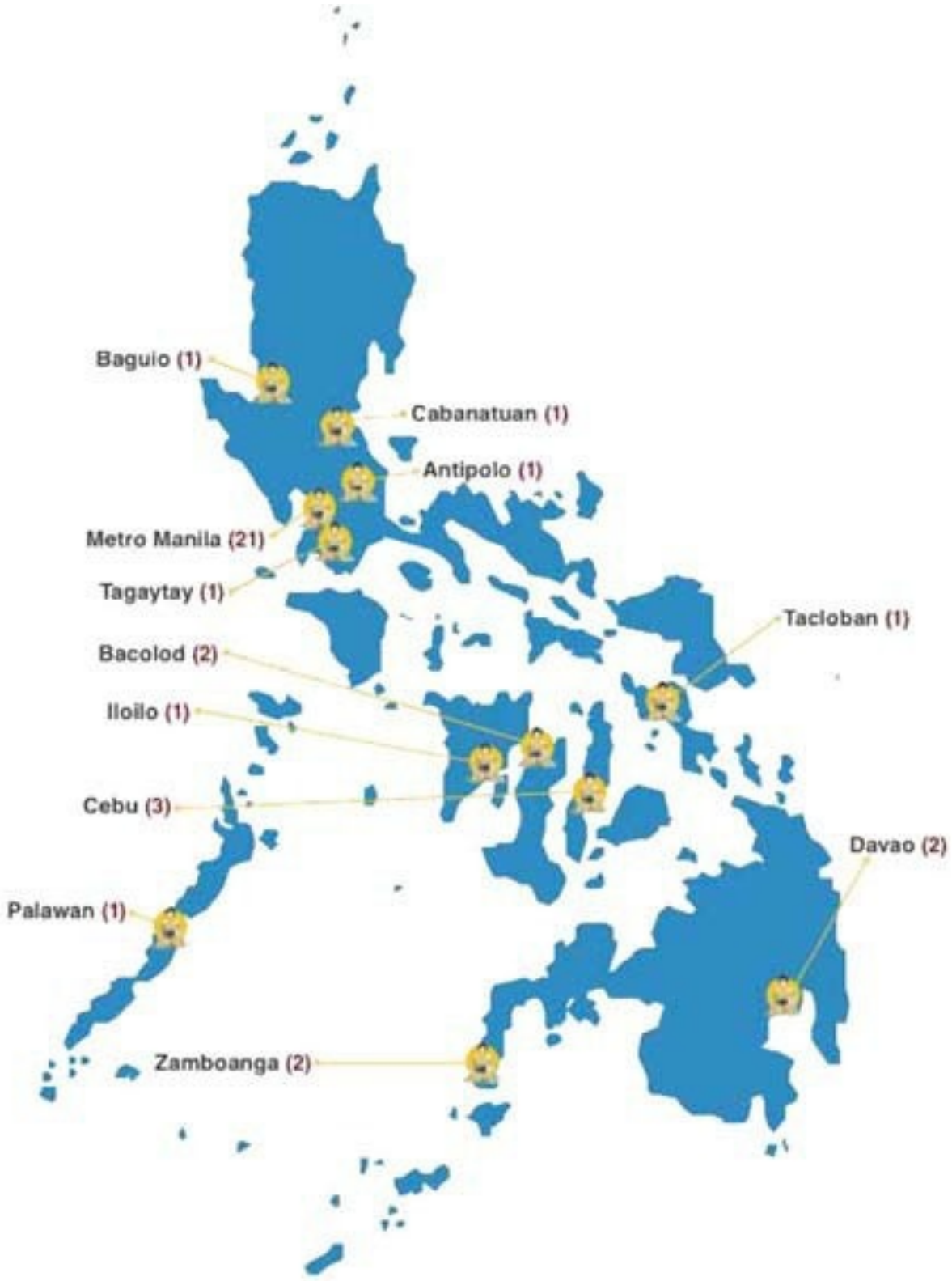


Figure 1

Map of the Philippines indicating the location of 37 Chinese Buddhist temples

TABLE 1

Chinese Buddhist Temples in the Philippines

By Foundation Year

	Name of Temple	Location	Year
1	Seng Guan Temple (Xinyuan Si)	Manila	1937
2	Ling Hong Temple (Lingfeng Si)	Cabanatuan	1938
3	Poh Chong Temple (Baozang Si)	Manila	1948
4	Hoc Chuan Temple (Fuquan Si)	Zamboanga	1950
5	Manila Buddha Temple (Putuo Si)	Manila	1951
6	Soc Yan Temple (Suyan Si)	Manila	1952
7	Hwa Chong Temple (Huazang Si)	Manila	1953
8	Un Siu Temple (Yinxiu Si)	Manila	1956
9	Po Lian Temple (Baolian Si)	Davao	1959
10	Che Wan Temple (Lingjiu Si)	Manila	1965
11	Long Hua Temple (Longhua Si)	Davao	1968
12	Buddha-Light Temple (Foguang Si)	Cebu	1970
13	Fa Tzang Temple (Fazang Si)	Bacolod	1972
14	Holy Buddhist Temple (Guanyin Si)	Manila	1975
15	Lian Hua Temple (Lianhua Si)	Manila	1976
16	Hai En Temple (Haiyin Si)	Manila	1976
17	Tian Lian Temple (Tianlian Si)	Manila	1977
18	Chong Hoc Temple (Chongfu Si)	Manila	1978
19	Baguio Buddha Temple (Biyao Putuo Si)	Baguio	1978
20	Phu Shian Temple (Puxian Si, formerly Dinghui Si)	Cebu	1979

21	Thousand Buddha Temple (Puji Chan Si)	Manila	1980
22	Lam Hua Temple (Nanhua Si)	Tacloban	1982
23	Wan Tong Temple (Yuantong Si)	Manila	1983
24	Tien Tiok Am (Tianzhu An)	Manila	1984
25	Chu Un Temple (Cien Si)	Cebu	1988
26	Bun Su Temple (Wenshu Si)	Manila	1990
27	Kim Sha Temple (Jinsha Si)	Manila	1990
28	An Bao Vihara (Anbao Jingshe)	Antipolo	1990
29	Yuan Thong Temple (Yuantong Si)	Bacolod	1991
30	Mabuhay Temple (Manila Foguangshan Wannian Si)	Manila	1993
31	Iloilo Foguang Yuan (Yilang Foguang Yuan)	Iloilo	1999
32	Tsi Tiok Lin Vihara (Zizhulin Jingshe)	Manila	2000
33	Ocean Sky Chan Monastery (Haitian Chan Si)	Manila	2002
34	Miao De Chan Temple (Miaode Chan Si)	Tagaytay	2006
35	Hwat Kong Temple (Fakong Si)	Manila	2010
36	Palawan Fayu Temple (Balawan Fayu Si)	Palawan	2010
37	Sam Poh Temple (Sanbao Si)	Zamboanga	Unclea

Sources: Shi Chuanmiao (2008) and author’s fieldwork (2010–2015)

Notes regarding the temple list:

The names of temples are given as they are known in the Philippines. Most are transliterated from their Hokkien pronunciations without following a particular Romanization system.

The foundation years refer to the time when the present temple buildings construction finished and these were opened for use. Some communities existed in temporary lodgings for quite a long time before a proper temple could be built. The most important examples are the Holy Buddhist, Wan Tong, and Hoc Chuan temples, all of which had communities gathered around an image of Guanyin enshrined in private homes for many years before a temple was built.

Monks and nuns refer respectively to bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, the Indic terms for male and female monastics who have “left home.” Lay sisters or caigu refer to the unique tradition in South Fujian of unshaven women who devote their lives to spiritual cultivation in a temple community. In the Buddhist system, they are not formally considered monastics and have a lay status equivalent to the Indic term upasika.

If present administration has changed from the original founder(s), this is indicated after the “/.” When the singular is used, this means that the founder or present administrator is an individual rather than a community of monastics.

Temples that no longer function as such are not included in the list. These were built by lay devotees but are no longer open for public use due to the absence of monastics to direct temple life. These include the Lohan Temple (Luohan Si) in Alabang, the Qingxiang Temple (Qingxiang Si) in Quezon City, and the Puji Temple (Danlu Puji Si) in Tarlac.

Patterns of growth

The first noteworthy point is the lay provenance of these temples. In many instances, it was the faith and devotion of lay believers that led to the establishment of temples. Shi Chuanmiao (2008), in a thesis written in Chinese, documented this in his historical brief of each temple. I already mentioned the cases of communities gathered around devotion to Guanyin as early as the Spanish period that later built temples and invited monastics to come and propagate the Dharma. This pattern was repeated in later periods when communities outside Manila requested monastics to take charge of their temples, e.g., Davao Long Hua Temple and Zamboanga Hoc Chuan Temple.

Related to this but deserving of special mention is the role of the lay sisters or caigu .[8] In South Fujian, these women have existed since the late 19th century. At first, caigu was a generic category that could apply to vegetarian women living in any kind of Chinese religious temple, but over time, the term came to specifically designate Buddhist religious women (Liu 2005, 4). They lived the life of monastics without the status and prestige that went with the vocation of an ordained nun; they were classified as householders or upasikas, known in Chinese as youboyi , but in fact lived a monastic lifestyle (Faqing 1992). They took refuge under monks or older caigu, could take their own disciples, and were responsible for the survival of many small temples in South Fujian, especially Quanzhou . Both virgins and widows could become caigu, and this was reflected in the way caigu addressed their mentors.[9]

For most of the first half of the 20th century, women in South Fujian who desired a religious life became caigu rather than nuns, probably due to the lack of nuns propagating the nuns' vocation. Liu (2005, 18) notes that the caigu path was the only one that remained if a young woman desiring to become a nun was rejected by male monastics. The caigu had little or no formal training apart from the religious life of the temple, but many of them found their way to the Philippines and managed to found their own temples.

For example, Poh Chong, Holy Buddhist, and Soc Yan temples were founded by caigu and were later passed on by the founders to fellow caigu who were also their relatives. This gave rise to a third unique characteristic in the growth of

temples in the Philippines: the role of family, monastic, and regional networks in the founding and staffing of temples.

The central link here is Xingyuan. Many of the monastics he invited to go to Manila, ostensibly to assist him at the Seng Guan Temple, eventually started their own temples. These monastics were his colleagues or disciples, or else had taken refuge under him. The monks Ruman (1910–1983) and Shanqi (1902–1974) started their own temples, Manila Buddha Temple and Buddha Light Temple, respectively. The nun Ruimiao (1924–1998) started the Che Wan Temple. The caigu Yuanjing (b. 1930), Wenlian (1911–1960), and Xiuqin (1924–2002) all started their own temples, namely the Hai En, Soc Yan, and Tian Lian temples, respectively.[10]

Ruijin, one of the first monks invited by Xingyuan to come to Manila, did not found his own temples, but his disciples did. Guangchun (1922–2010) started the Thousand Buddha Temple and Guangfan (1927–2004) the Longhua Temple. Ruijin was responsible for a host of other developments that strengthened the practice of Buddhism in the country. Whereas most of the early monks in the Philippines died relatively young, he lived to the age of 100. In his long career as a monk, he was the longest-serving abbot of Seng Guan Temple and in this capacity, not only expanded the temple's facilities in a major way, but also empowered the leaders of other temples, especially those run by caigu (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 110–112; Chen Quanzhong 2011). For example, Ruijin was instrumental in building up other temples like Wan Tong Temple (where his own grandniece was a caigu) and Fa Tzang Temple.[11]

The monastics' hometowns or the places in China significant to their own devotions also figured prominently in the founding of new temples in the Philippines. This was expressed in the names given to the temples, which were often the same names as the temples where they first took refuge in the Buddha. This is the case for the Che Wan, Soc Yan, Chong Hoc, and Tian Lian temples.

The relationship with the "mother temples" or places of origin was not just sentimental. The founders never forgot their hometowns and were involved in rebuilding temples or supporting infrastructure projects in Fujian.[12] Without a doubt, the founding of temples in the Philippines also benefited the communities in China where the founding monastics came from.

In other cases, the devotion to Guanyin was a significant factor in the naming of

the new temples. Thousand Buddha (Puji in Chinese), Un Siu, Wan Tong, and Tsi Tiok Lin were named after temples in Mount Putuo, spiritual home of Guanyin in China. Kim Sha Temple was built to honor a statue of Guanyin brought from Mount Putuo to the Kim Sha Temple in Shishi , Jinjiang , Fujian, and then to Manila. Tian Tiok Am enshrines a Guanyin image from the Tian Tiok Am in Gupo , Jinjiang.

Aside from place names, some temple names also reflect the background of Guanyin. The Chinese names of the Manila and Baguio Buddha Temples, Putuo , is short for Putuoluojia or Potalaka, the realm of Guanyin according to the sutras associated with her.[13] Wan Tong (yuan tong) refers to a quality of Guanyin as an accommodating listener: er gen yuan tong (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 82).

Finally, the location of the temples must also be noted. Some of them are in close proximity to each other. For example, Seng Guan Temple and Tian Tiok Am are on the same street, and Soc Yan and Manila Buddha temples are nearby. Kim Sha Temple and Tsi Tiok Lin Vihara are just a little bit further off, in the center of Manila's Chinatown. Each temple has its core of regular devotees, whose commitment arises from various factors such as the charisma of the founder, the perceived efficacy of a particular Guanyin image, or the shared roots in a particular village in China. One might think that a minority religion would have only one temple in every major area of a foreign country, but Chinese Buddhism, like all Buddhism, does not have a central authority.

The religion spread according to the subjective inspirations of believers rather than according to some grand mission plan. In contrast, Christian missions are often centrally directed, which is why Chinese Christian churches, for example, are systematically distributed in the country. In the Chinese Catholic network that I belong to, major cities outside Metropolitan Manila have only one Chinese Catholic school and parish, unlike Buddhist temples that may have more than one temple in a city (e.g., Cebu, Bacolod, Davao, Zamboanga). This is an important difference in the way religious missions to the Chinese have developed.

Starting in the 1990s, Humanistic Buddhism from Taiwan gained a foothold in the Chinese Buddhist community of the Philippines. Foguangshan, Ciji (Tzu Chi), and Zhongtaishan, all centrally organized groups comparable to Catholic religious orders, are all active in varying degrees and are able to attract non-Chinese to their activities.

Monastic networks and backgrounds

Monks

From 1937 to 1958, all the Buddhist monks in the Philippines came from South Fujian. Xingyuan, the first one to arrive, came of age in the early 20th century when Buddhist institutes in China were still nonexistent. He left home at the age of twelve, and spent many of the subsequent years studying under his monk-teacher Xiguang in Nan'an (Ibid., 109). He also traveled to other parts of China such as Nanjing to listen to lectures by eminent monks. In 1920, aged 32, he gave a lecture on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana (Dacheng Qixin Lun) at Xiamen's Nanputuo Temple. Other lectures, notably one on the Śūra gama Sūtra (Lengyan Jing) followed, and he organized three Buddhist studies research societies at temples in Xiamen and Quanzhou.

On a trip to Xiamen in 1948, he founded another institute for the training of female monastics (Ibid., 110).[14] Since Buddhism in the Philippines was in its early stages, it would seem that Xingyuan attended to the training of monastics in South Fujian who would later be involved in propagating Buddhism.

In 1939, two years after his own arrival in Manila, Xingyuan invited more monks from Fujian to join him. Among them was Ruman, already mentioned, who was 30 years old at that time and had been trained in several temples in Fujian and Mount Putuo from the age of 16 (Ibid., 122).

Ruijin, who succeeded Xingyuan as abbot of Seng Guan Temple, had the benefit of being trained in Buddhist institutes that were being organized in the 1920s, including the South Fujian Buddhist Institute (Minnan Foxueyuan), which opened in 1924.[15] He studied the vinaya, the rules for monks, under the famous monk and vinaya specialist Hongyi .[16] Before being invited by Xingyuan to go to the Philippines, he was involved in founding a Buddhist magazine and an institute for the training of young monks in Xiamen.[17]

Xingyuan and Ruijin were trained at Buddhist institutes and had experiences of teaching Buddhism, but in the Philippines, their first focus was to establish temples and communities of spiritual practice. The need for Buddhist education, however, soon became apparent, and together with Master Yinshun (1906–2005),[18] who served in Manila briefly from 1958 to 1960, and Miaoqin (1921–1976), the four monks founded the Philippine Academy of Sakya, a primary and

secondary school, in 1959.[19]

Although Yinshun was given the title of Founding Principal, it was Miaoqin who personally supervised all aspects of the school's founding years. A native of Hui'an in Fujian, he became a monk at the age of five, was ordained at the age of fifteen in Quanzhou's Chengtian Temple, and received formal Buddhist education at institutes in Xiamen, Jiangsu, and Sichuan (Ibid., 33). Among his teachers were Yinshun and Taixu. He himself had some experience teaching in Hangzhou and writing articles on Chinese Buddhist history.

It was in 1949 that Xingyuan invited Miaoqin to go to Manila and assist at Seng Guan Temple. He began teaching at the first Buddhist school in the Philippines, Samantabhadra Institute, in 1952. Wanting to study early Buddhism, Miaoqin went to a Buddhist university in Sri Lanka from 1953 to 1958, and upon his return to Manila, was assigned to take charge of Dharma affairs at both Seng Guan and Hwa Chong temples (Ibid., 33–34). It was at this time that he took part in the plans for a new Buddhist school, and devoted the rest of his life to the task.

Yinshun was the first non-Fujianese monk to come to Manila. He was invited to give a series of talks in 1954. In 1958, he visited Manila again to greet Xingyuan on his birthday, on which occasion he was requested to become the first joint abbot of Seng Guan and Hwa Chong temples (Ibid., 89). He served as abbot for only two years and then returned to Taiwan, where he had been based.

During the first twenty years of institutional Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, the monks all came from South Fujian and this meant that the practice of Buddhism established in the Philippines was modeled on South Fujianese forms of Buddhism. For example, from the beginning until the present, chanting services in the Philippines are done in the Minnan (a.k.a. Hokkien) dialect of South Fujian (Ibid., 86ff.).

The year 1958 was when significant links with monks from outside Fujian were established. Accompanying Yinshun was Zhengzong (b. 1925), who stayed behind after Yinshun returned to Taiwan in 1960. He founded the meditation class at Seng Guan Temple and often lectured there.

Zili (1928–2010) and Weici (b. 1925) also arrived from Taiwan (Ibid., 120, 176) in 1958. Both were natives of Jiangsu and did not speak the Minnan dialect, but

both had sought refuge in Taiwan in the 1940s, during the period of civil war in China (1927–1950). Both studied under Cihang (1893–1954)[20] at the Taiwan Buddhist Studies Academy (Taiwan Foxueyuan), and would acknowledge Cihang as their great teacher for the rest of their monastic careers.

Zili and Weici went to the Philippines upon the invitation of Liu Meisheng , who had founded the Samantabhadra Institutes in Manila and Cebu[21] to respond to the need for Buddhist education in the country. The Chinese language taught in the institutes was Mandarin, and despite their heavy Jiangsu accents, the two monks managed to take charge of the Buddhist religion classes—Zili in Manila and Weici in Cebu.

Zili also began lecturing on weekends at the Seng Guan Temple and at the Un Siu Temple. He eventually became the resident teacher in the latter temple. He founded the Taixu Lecture Hall there, and the temple became known for the short lectures that always followed the chanting assemblies.[22] Unlike other temples on feast days, when the entire morning was spent on chanting, at Un Siu this took only one hour, and another hour was devoted to lectures by different monastics and lay believers.

Meanwhile, Weici was in Cebu where there was only one Buddhist temple in 1958. He was asked to be abbot of the Dinghui Temple in 1961, and in 1978 he moved this temple to a better location and renamed it the Phu Shian (Puxian) Temple (Ibid., 175–176). He was also asked to be the Principal at Samantabhadra Institute, a position he held for many years. Aside from teaching in the school, he also lectured at the temple on Sundays.

In the years after 1958, most of the monks who came to the Philippines were again from South Fujian, but in the 1990s, monks from non-Hokkien speaking areas were also invited and some have taken on positions of leadership. Chuanchan (b. 1962), from Fuan in Northeast Fujian, arrived in 1993 and became the abbot of Hoc Chuan Temple in Zamboanga (Ibid., 195). Jiejin (b. 1958), from Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province, arrived in 1994 and eventually became the abbot of Sam Po Temple, also in Zamboanga (Ibid., 197). In 1996, Daoyuan (b. 1964), originally from Anhui Province, arrived to take up the position of abbot at the Manila and Baguio Buddha Temples (Ibid., 125). Nengzhen (b. 1966), a native of Putian in East Fujian, was only on a visit to Manila in 2001 when he was invited to stay in Davao. He became the abbot of the Long Hua Temple there the following year (Ibid., 199).

There were no set patterns in the network of monks who came to the Philippines. Those who arrived earlier, like Xingyuan and Ruijin, invited their Dharma brothers or other contacts to join them. Some of these later established their own temples or were invited to head existing temples.[23] In some cases, the lay boards of existing folk temples invited monks to come and transform their temples into proper Buddhist ones.[24]

Lay sisters

As mentioned earlier, the caigu were a special kind of female monastic in South Fujian. Such women found their way to the Philippines independently of the monks. The first to arrive in Manila was Qinghe (1890–1980) in 1917 (Ibid., 87). Her initial purpose was to raise funds for charitable projects in China, but she decided to stay and propagate Buddhism. She brought a statue of Guanyin from Mount Putuo, where she had made her vows, and established a small shrine on Juan Luna Street in Manila until she started the larger Un Siu Temple in Caloocan in 1949 (Ibid., 120).

In 1929, Xiuyin (1910–1967) arrived in Manila and engaged in personal spiritual practice in Cabanatuan and Manila until she was able to purchase land in Cubao in 1947, where she later built the Poh Chong Temple (Ibid., 140).

Qinghe and Xiuyin were followed by several other caigu who also founded their own temples. No less than one-third of the temples in the Philippines were founded by caigu, a testament to their competence and strength of will. The founders invited fellow caigu to come from China and help them staff the temples. These were often their own relatives.

Temples run by caigu in Fujian also had the practice of raising orphan girls or those unwanted by their families. From a young age, the girls followed a monastic lifestyle, including a vegetarian diet. This practice ensured the continuity of the temple. This practice was also present in the Philippines, notably at the Soc Yan and Hai En Temples. At both temples, I met women who had lived in the temple since childhood and later became caigu or nuns. I was also told that the women were not coerced into becoming monastics. Once they finished university education, they were free to leave the temple and some did so.[25]

At present, there are no more girls being given up to be raised at the caigu temples in the Philippines, but there are caigu who continue to come from China. Among the local women who were raised as caigu, some have opted for full ordination as nuns out of a desire to have more formal Buddhist training, or to legitimize their status as monastics (Ibid., 88). This contrasts with the situation in South Fujian, where the caigu retained their unique status despite the

possibility of being ordained.[26]

Of the sparse literature on the phenomenon of caigu, the most comprehensive is the doctoral dissertation of Liu Yi-jung (2005). A monk-informant told me that the caigu probably flourished the most in the Philippines in terms of their accomplishments,[27] but Liu's work shows the extent of the caigu's work in South Fujian and their special contribution to Buddhist monastic life.

Nuns

The first Buddhist nun to propagate the Dharma in the Philippines was Ruimiao, originally from Jinjiang, South Fujian.[28] She first took the bodhisattva vows under Xingyuan at the Nanputuo Temple in Xiamen in 1948. Planning to join her father in Manila in 1949, religious experiences at a stopover in Hong Kong led her to train for ordination there. Upon the invitation of Poh Chong Temple, she went to Manila in 1954 and undertook various works, including a stint at the Sam Po Temple in Zamboanga. In 1962, she founded the Che Wan Temple in Sta. Mesa, Manila, together with the caigu Xinlian .

For many years, Ruimiao was the only Buddhist nun in the Philippines, but by the late 1970s, some of the young women brought up at the caigu temples traveled to Taiwan to attend Buddhist institutes and train for ordination. Among this group are Soc Yan Temple's abbess, Guangming , who also teaches the Buddhist education classes at two Buddhist secondary schools in Manila; Hai En Temple's Zongdao , who heads the Chinese language department at the Philippine Academy of Sakya; and the present abbess of the Tian Lian Temples in both Quanzhou and Manila, Haomin (b. 1966).[29]

There were also caigu who did not study at Buddhist institutes but underwent short periods of training in Taiwan or elsewhere in order to be ordained as nuns. Shi Chuanmiao names several of them (2008, 88). Their ultimate objective was to legitimize their status as monastics so that they could assume leadership in their temples. There was a conventional idea prevailing in some quarters that caigu should not head their own temples because of their "inferior" monastic status, so some temples asked monks to be their abbots in name, although the caigu actually ran their own affairs.[30] For example, after the death of the caigu Wenlian, founder of Soc Yan Temple, her successor asked Ruijin to be the nominal abbot and he held this post for forty-five years (1960–2005). In 1984, perhaps to plan the future of the temple, Ruijin ordained the caigu Guangren , and she became the abbess when Ruijin died in 2005 (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 143–144).

Other temples founded by caigu did not arrange for nominal abbots. The caigu themselves got ordained and assumed leadership in their temples. This happened

at the Holy Buddhist Temple, where the caigu Miaozhen (b. 1952), brought up in the temple by her "grandmother,"[31] took charge of the temple after her grandmother's death and then had herself ordained in the United States, taking the new name Hengji (Ibid., 139).

There are also cases of local Chinese women who are not caigu but went straight to Buddhist training and ordination in Taiwan. This route was taken by two former students of Zili who became nuns and today manage the Un Siu Temple.[32]

Chinese women from the Philippines who wanted to study Buddhism and also seek ordination did so in Taiwan. This is an important link considering the number of temples managed by women, whether nuns or caigu. In the 1970s when these women sought Buddhist education, China had not yet opened up to the outside world, but Buddhist institutes had already been operating in Taiwan for some time.[33] The Taiwanese government was also supporting the Chinese language curricula of Chinese schools in the Philippines,[34] so it was only natural for the Buddhist women to go there for training.

The link with Taiwan was further strengthened with the arrival of Taiwanese nuns in the Philippines. The first to do so was Jingping (b. 1959), a disciple of Ruimiao. She had graduated from a Buddhist institute in Taizhong , but did not seek ordination until she met Ruimiao in 1985. Jingping went to the Philippines in 1998 to help fulfill Ruimiao's dream of a Buddhist institute in the Philippines that would propagate Buddhism among native Filipinos. Jingping has since founded the institute, as well as a new temple, in Tagaytay City.

Aside from Jingping, the other Taiwanese nuns who went to the Philippines belonged to large Buddhist orders. Nuns from Foguangshan arrived in 1989 and now have four temples in four different cities. The Ocean Sky Chan Monastery, belonging to the Zhongtaishan order, was founded in Manila by Zhongtaishan monks in 2002, but at present it is run by nuns from the same order.

As of 2011, of the thirty-seven temples still in operation in the Philippines, fourteen are run by monks, fifteen by nuns, five by caigu, and three by lay Buddhists. The table below shows their geographical distribution in the country's main island clusters:

TABLE 2

Geographical Distribution of Temples and Summary of Leadership Status

as of 2011

	Monks	Nuns	Lay sisters (caigu)	Laity	Total
Luzon including Manila	8	11	5	2	26
Visayas	3	4	0	0	7
Mindanao	3	0	0	1	4
Total	14	15	5	3	37

At present, only five temples remain in the hands of caigu, and three are run by lay people, but referring back to Table 1, twenty of these temples were founded by either lay Buddhists or caigu, evidence of the crucial role played by lay Buddhists in the propagation and institutionalization of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines.

The majority of monastic men and women engaged in the ritualistic life of the temple. Morning and evening devotions were done together in the temple, but the rest of the day was devoted to self-cultivation, domestic work, or the organization of chanting for the lay faithful. Most of the time, these devotional practices were to pray for the deceased members of Chinese families.

The monastics mostly engaged in devotional practices involving rituals to serve the needs of the Chinese, while very few did formal study and propagation of the Dharma. Further, the monastics spoke only Chinese, either Mandarin or Hokkien, and this limited their activities to the Chinese community. This situation only changed in the 1990s with the arrival of nuns from Taiwan. These nuns could offer some classes in English, but such activities were limited to the temples run by the Taiwanese orders like Foguangshan.

Regular activities

The latter part of this chapter details the history and present activities of all thirty-seven temples, but let me begin with a general description of some elements that can be found in all the temples.

Religious practice

As I demonstrated earlier, a strong devotion to the bodhisattva Guanyin was present among the Chinese in the Philippines, even during the Spanish era. When temples began to be built, her image naturally had a special place in them. Most of the temples enshrine Guanyin in a special altar, while the main shrine hall has the "Three Precious Ones (Sanbao [35])" of Śākyamuni Buddha in the middle, Amitābha Buddha to the right of Śākyamuni, indicating his lordship over the Pure Land in the western universe, and Bhai ajyaguru Buddha, the Medicine Buddha to the left, in charge of the eastern universe where his Pure Land of Lapis Lazuli is located. Śākyamuni is often flanked by the attending bodhisattvas Wenshu (Mañjuśrī) and Puxian (Samantabhadra).

The bigger temples have a hall where the soul tablets of the deceased faithful are kept. These are small, wooden tokens inscribed with the name and other details of the deceased, where part of the soul is believed to reside.[36] The central shrine of this hall is dedicated to K itigarbha (Dizang), the bodhisattva who is especially concerned to liberate those reborn in the "hells" of Chinese Buddhist cosmology. The present-day devotion to Dizang has a very long history in China.[37]

The regular devotion days in the temples, following Chinese religious custom, are the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, which correspond to the appearance of the new and full moons. Devotees visit the temples on these days to make their private prayers and offerings, usually lighting incense and adding oil to the lamps. Some temples organize a weekend fahui (chanting session, also known as Dharma assembly) to accommodate the urban and Christian lifestyle of the Chinese in the Philippines.

Aside from the monthly devotion days, many Buddhist feasts are marked throughout the year, usually with chanting in the morning followed by a vegetarian lunch. The monastic community organizes the chanting, and lay devotees contribute financially to provide the vegetarian lunch to all who come to the temple for the assemblies.[38] On the following page are the major festivals, whether marked on a big or small scale, in the lunar calendar in most of the temples.

TABLE 3

Major Buddhist Feast Days Observed in the Philippines

Month	Day	Feast
1	1	Maitreya’s birthday
1	9	Sakra Devanam Indra’s (known in colloquial Chinese as Tia
2	19	Guanyin’s birthday
4 (Western)	5	Qingming Festival
4	8	The Buddha’s birthday, a.k.a. Vesak
6	19	Guanyin’s enlightenment
7	15	Yulanpen Festival to mark the “Hungry Ghosts Festival”
7	30	Kşitigarbha’s birthday
9	19	Guanyin’s renunciation
9	30	Buddha Bhayşajyaguru’s birthday
11	17	Buddha Amitābha’s birthday
12	8	The Buddha’s enlightenment
		Year-end thanksgiving service

Other feasts, such as those of the various bodhisattvas, are marked by the monastic community privately, i.e., without a public chanting service.

In general, texts used by Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines are either sutras from the Chinese Buddhist canon, or spells that are believed to have the power to protect the believer or ward off evil. These will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Sutras and spells are chanted within a Dharma assembly organized by the monastic community, most often for the purpose of acquiring blessings and healing. As mentioned earlier, this is done on Sundays or on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month. Whenever a service is done around lunchtime, there is always a ritual observed for making offerings to the wandering spirits.[39]

Two of the temples in Metro Manila—Seng Guan and Thousand Buddha—have meditation groups or jingxiu ban that meet weekly.[40] In both places, there is a two-hour session that includes sitting meditation, circumambulation, and a short talk by a monastic or one of the senior lay members. Both groups have an active membership of between twenty and thirty, much less than the believers who attend chanting services.

As can be expected of any religion, there are different levels of spiritual practice in Chinese Buddhism. While Chan and Pure Land beliefs clearly dominate in the Chinese Buddhist temples of the Philippines, my conversations with devotees indicate that there are varying degrees of faith and understanding.

The most basic level of belief, with the largest numbers of people participating, involves devotions during the first and fifteenth of the lunar month. I call this popular Buddhism. People go to the temples for a few minutes of prayer ritualized by the lighting of incense and the offerings of food. If they have concerns in their personal life or in their livelihood, they may make use of the Guanyin oracle sticks and the crescent moon-shaped divination tablets.[41] Such divination practices are not properly Buddhist, as many monastics told me, but they are tolerated in the temples because the devotees need them. In time, the monastics hope that these believers can be weaned away from folk practices and move toward a deeper understanding of Buddhism. For the time being, perhaps out of fear of losing the devotees and in the spirit of utilizing “skillful means,”

such practices are accommodated. The exception to this practice are the Taiwanese orders promoting Humanistic Buddhism, whose temples do not allow folk practices like divination and the burning of spirit money.

Aside from popular devotions on designated days, lay believers or householders approach the monastic community for special needs, especially when there is a death in the family. A number of monastics from the temple of choice are invited to conduct chanting services at the wake or funeral. These rituals take up much of the monastics' time, and also provide the temple with a steady income. The monastics may also be invited to bless homes, businesses, and marriages, but the funerary rituals are easily the most requested service.

In every temple, there is a small core of more committed believers. In the Philippines, a predominantly Catholic country, most of those who practice popular Buddhism are also baptized Catholics who may go to church regularly. This is the reality of religious syncretism, which I will discuss at greater length in Chapter 4. But there are also Buddhists who practice only Buddhism, even if they have studied at Christian schools or received baptism. These are the ones who have sought a deeper practice, i.e., more than just lighting incense regularly. They attend chanting or meditation sessions, listen to lectures, and learn a lot of Buddhism from self-study and dialogue with the monastics. These are the faithful devotees who do not go to Christian churches or practice other forms of Chinese popular religion, although they may lapse in this respect (i.e., use divination instruments) when faced with a desperate situation.[42] Still, this class of believers, although small, would represent the deepest level of lay practice in the Philippines.

The Ocean Sky Chan Monastery, a branch of Zhongtaishan, has a unique approach to promoting Chan meditation. The small, modern temple offers meditation classes in English and Chinese, and these have been popular with the general public. The temple also offers Chinese language, art, and calligraphy classes, with a special summer camp for children held every year. All activities are free of charge and participants make donations according to their ability to pay.

The effort to promote Buddhism among native Filipinos, i.e., non-Chinese, is also carried out by the Miao De Chan Bodhisattva Society, which has a temple in Tagaytay City, just a few hours by land south of Metro Manila.

These efforts to bring Buddhism beyond the Chinese community are indicative of a hopeful future for Buddhism in the Philippines. The form of this Buddhism is still noticeably Chinese, but over time, it could develop into a unique form of Filipino Buddhism.

Education and culture

The lay societies at Seng Guan Temple organized Buddhist schools like Po Hian (Puxian) School in Manila (1947), with a branch in Cebu (1955) and known in English as Samantabhadra Institute. The Seng Guan congregation also established the Philippine Academy of Sakya (1960), which has become famous for training its students in mathematics. It has a branch in the Davao Long Hua Temple . The Hwa Chong Temple complex in Malabon also has a school, the Philippine Shing Guan Memorial Institute (1972). In 1997, Guangchun and Guangxue of the Thousand Buddha Temple founded the Philippine Buddhacare Academy.

All these schools, profiled in Chapter 5, are located in the vicinity of the temples that founded them, but all have become independent institutions. All follow the basic curriculum mandated by the Philippine government, but also require study of the Chinese language for two hours each day. Once a week, there is a class on Buddhism usually taught by a monastic using Chinese as the medium of instruction. School events always include brief Buddhist chants.

Through Chinese language lessons that emphasize Confucian teachings and Buddhism classes, the Buddhist schools are also helping preserve Chinese language and culture. The programs also promote Buddhism among the younger generations of Chinese Filipinos. This is, in fact, the stated aim of the schools—promoting Chinese language and culture along with Buddhism. The assumption has always been that the schools attract a majority of Chinese students., but this is no longer the case.

When the schools started, there was less intermarriage between Chinese and native Filipinos, and each school maintained a distinctly Chinese subculture. This was complemented by family life, where the Hokkien dialect was spoken at home. With the passage of time, however, there has been more intermarriage and assimilation of the Chinese into Philippine society. The result is that some children who attend Buddhist schools often do not have a strong Chinese cultural background. Only half or less of the student population of these schools still speak any form of Chinese at home.[43] This presents a major challenge for the schools' objective of imparting Chinese language and Buddhist teachings to the

students.

As a way of supplementing the work of the schools, Seng Guan Temple's lay society offers lessons in Chinese language and Buddhism on Sundays.[44] There are three age groups being served and the teachers are all lay volunteers who are themselves devout Buddhists. During the summer, Seng Guan and other temples organize camps that last for one to four weeks, all incorporating Chinese language, arts, and Buddhist teachings into the program.

In Chinese Buddhism, the publication of Buddhist materials is a popular way of earning spiritual merit (Fisher 2011). In the Philippines, not only are there textbooks prepared and published by monks for use in the Buddhist schools,[45] but also magazines and sutras that are constantly being printed and distributed for free. Just like in China and Taiwan, most of the temples have a small corner with shelves full of various materials printed by devotees who want to promote a certain text or practice.[46] For example, there are always copies of the Universal Door of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva (Guanshiyin Pusa Pumen Pin) and the Great Compassion Spell (Dabei Zhou), available. Of the longer texts, those related to Amitābha Buddha and K itigarbha (Dizang) Bodhisattva are quite popular. These texts are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Digital audio and video discs are also available for free distribution at the temples. The content of these audiovisual materials ranges from recorded lectures and Dharma assemblies to films of Buddhist stories. Most of these materials are sourced from China or Taiwan, and since they can be reproduced inexpensively, have become welcome additions to the printed materials.

Chinese-Filipino Buddhists who were born in the Philippines have established new organizations that aim to promote Buddhism using the English language. These are not formally connected with any temple community but are financed and run by lay Buddhists. They carry out activities such as Dharma talks in English and the promotion of Buddhism in mainstream society. The Universal Wisdom Foundation, for example, organizes regular lectures at their headquarters and was responsible for having the Buddha's birthday featured in a series of postage stamps. Another example is the Philippine Amitābha Society, which promotes Pure Land and Confucian teachings through programs conducted in both Chinese and English. These organizations are similar to the Buddhist associations that developed in Singapore and Malaysia (to be discussed in Chapter 3) as new generations of Chinese Buddhists emerged. They are less

sectarian in their approach and are creating a new form of Buddhism for modern times.

Social projects

Practically all of the temples carry out charitable works, distributing food to the poor during Christmas, organizing free health clinics, and carrying out relief work during times of natural calamities. These clinics are listed in Table 4, found in Chapter 5.

Since 1994, the Tzu Chi Foundation has also been active in Manila and later, in Cebu and Zamboanga. In the Philippines, they are known for their medical missions. Tzu Chi does not build temples, but focuses instead on social centers for helping the poor. The group rose to national prominence for their work in the Visayas (Bohol and Leyte) after the devastating earthquakes and typhoons in 2013.

Chapter 5 will discuss Chinese Buddhist education and charitable activities in greater detail, linking them to the preservation of Chinese identity and the place of the Chinese community in Philippine society.

From this historical overview of Buddhism in the Philippines, it can be said that Buddhism did not have a sustained impact in the country until the 20th century. The establishment of temples from the 1930s onward accompanied a wave of migration from China that signaled the arrival of a new generation of Chinese in the Philippines. As foreigners in a strange land, they held on to their Chinese folk beliefs. This explains the proliferation of Buddhist, Daoist, and mixed temples in the major Philippine cities where there is a significant Chinese populations.[47]

These temples did not serve a religious function alone. For the first and second generations of immigrants, they also acted as community centers where a common, shared identity could be expressed through rituals and various activities. In a land where a foreign language was spoken and the Chinese were at times persecuted, the temples were havens where the Chinese could feel safe and pray to their gods for divine assistance.

For the Buddhist temples that could be considered “pure,” the regular temple activities provided a religious culture that emphasized devotions and rituals to accompany major life events, especially death. The Buddhist temples in the

Philippines therefore maintain their focus on the Buddhist deities, but do not seem to give priority to preaching the Dharma as embodied in the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the teachings on impermanence and dependent origination, and the philosophies and practices of the different Chinese traditions of Buddhism.

As the third and fourth generations of Chinese grow up in the Philippines, there is also less interest in the temples. Even Sycip's 1957 thesis noted how young people accompanied their elders to the temple but did not always participate in the rites. The temples are surviving and still provide a range of religious services, as well as works in education and charity, but it is difficult to predict what kind of future is in store for them. Certainly, there are young people actively participating in the activities of some of the temples, and the future of those temples lies in the path that they will choose. I will discuss the possible future of Buddhism in the Philippines in the conclusion of this chapter.

In the 1990s, Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines underwent a revival as Buddhist movements from Taiwan made their presence felt. Both Foguangshan and Ciji emphasized Humanistic Buddhism rather than the rituals of the established temples. Working to alleviate the suffering of the poor, done in a very Chinese way, captured the imagination of many Chinese Filipinos, even if they considered themselves Christians.[48]

To complete this chapter's overview of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, I present temple profiles that will illustrate how the hitherto general information is substantiated in particular circumstances (see next page). For each temple, a brief history is provided, as well as the architectural layout to give a sense of the size and level of activity of the temple community, and a description of monastic and lay practices. An overall analysis of the major temples follows.

Profiles of Temples

A. METROPOLITAN MANILA

1. An Bao Vihara (Anbao Jingshe)

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Tel. 02 6584885

History

This vihara was established for personal practice in 1990 by Yuanguang , who provides feng shui consultancy services. Born in Taiwan, he came to Manila in 1971, aged 32, and served at Seng Guan Temple for twelve years. After a brief return to Taiwan in late 1983, he returned to Manila and stayed at Tsio Ko Bio (Shigu Miao) , a folk Daoist temple, for some years until he had the resources to establish his own vihara.

Main Buildings

The vihara occupies a flat in a condominium unit. It has a small shrine and living quarters.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Ven. Yuanguang does not organize public activities at this vihara. He uses it as a base for personal spiritual practice and entertains various requests for his services.

2. Bun Su Temple (Wenshu Si)

Contact Information

2711 F.B. Harrison St., Pasay City

Tel. 02 8332570

History

Located close to Chong Hoc Temple and a Daoist temple dedicated to Bao Wang Gong , this small temple was built by the caigu Zhenyuan , a.k.a. Pong Ko (Tugu). Born in Jinjiang in 1928, she began living at the Soc Yan Temple in Quanzhou from the age of nine under the tutelage of the caigu Wenlian , who later founded the Soc Yan Temple in Manila. In 1965, she was invited to the Soc Yan Temple in Manila, where she stayed until 1974. She was then requested by Ven. Ruijin to take care of Fa Tzang Temple in Bacolod, where she stayed until 1982. Returning to Manila, she rented private lodging until she was able to gather enough resources to build Bun Su Temple in 1990. In 2003, at age 75, she turned over ownership and administration of the temple to Chong Hoc Temple through Zhengzhe . By 2015, she had moved to Chong Hoc to receive better care. Two male monastics from Chong Hoc reside at Bunsu temple.

Main Buildings

Built in modern style almost resembling a Christian place of worship, the building has three floors. The ground floor has a shrine to Guanyin and a dining room; the second floor has a shrine to Bodhisattva Mañjusrī after whom the temple is named, and living quarters; the third floor enshrines the Buddhas of the five directions.

Leadership and Primary Activities

A small group of lay devotees gathers at the temple every fourth of the lunar month and on Buddhist feast days for chanting. The future of the temple is in the hands of the Chong Hoc Temple.

3. Che Wan Temple (Lingjiu Si)

Contact Information

550 Santol St., Sta. Mesa, City of Manila

Tel. 02 7145695, 7147957

History

Two women are behind the establishment of this temple. The first is Ruimiao , the first Buddhist nun to propagate the Dharma in the Philippines. She was born in Jinjiang in 1924 and first took the bodhisattva vows under Master Xingyuan (Xingyuan) in Xiamen in 1948. Planning to join her father in Manila in 1949, her experiences at a stopover in Hong Kong led her to train for ordination there. Invited by Manila's Poh Chong Temple, she arrived in the city in 1954 and undertook various works, including a stint at the Sam Po Temple in Zamboanga.

The caigu Xinlian was born in 1922 in Shishi, and left home to become a caigu in 1945, at the Lingjiu Temple (Lingjiu Si) in Shaohui, Jinjiang. She traveled to Hong Kong in 1957. From there, Ruimiao invited her to go to the Poh Chong Temple in Manila.

In 1962, the two women invited several lay Buddhists to form a foundation to start a new temple. The Che Wan Temple opened in 1965, taking the same Chinese name as the temple where Xinlian started her religious life. Ruimiao served as the first abbess, and Xinlian succeeded her in 1975. By 2015, Xinlian, aged 94 and in frail health for many years, had turned over leadership to Jingping, concurrently the abbess of Miaode Temple in Tagaytay.

Main Buildings

The temple began with only one building housing two worship halls on the

second floor, and a reception and dining hall on the ground floor. Prominent Chinese from different parts of the country donated the various statues of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Under the leadership of Xinlian, a columbary/ancestral hall, a lecture room, and a school building were later built.

Leadership and Primary Activities

After Ruimiao left the Philippines in 1975, the temple has been staffed only by caigu. Though Jingping is the abbess in name, daily affairs are managed by the only local-born caigu, Limei . Four other caigu reside in the temple, including one who arrived from China only in 2010.

Chanting is organized on the usual Buddhist feast days, especially the three Guanyin feasts and the chanting for the dead during the Qingming festival and the seventh lunar month. The temple is unique for organizing the Eight Precepts (Baguan Zhaijie) a three-day retreat held twice a year, during the first and ninth lunar months.

Ruimiao and Xinlian wanted to promote Buddhist education among Filipino youth. To this end, Xinlian built a school building and started a small kindergarten, but lack of staff in 2010 prompted her to entrust the facilities to the administration of the Philippine Amitābha Society. The Society is linked to an international network of societies inspired by Master Jingkong , and promotes Confucian education through a text called Dizigui , or Standards for Being a Good Student and Child. Its three-character verses were originally formulated by Li Yuexiu (1662–1722) based on the Analects of Confucius.

4. Chong Hoc Temple (Chongfu Si)

Contact Information

57 Williams St., Pasay City

Tel. 02 8316343, 7755739

History

This temple is spiritually linked to the temple of the same name in Quanzhou. Yuanguo , who became a monk in Quanzhou at the age of twelve, visited Manila in 1975 and found the resources to buy an old house on Williams Street. He converted it into a temple, which opened in 1978 with a main shrine dedicated to the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin. In 1993, Yuanguo invited Liren to come from the mother temple in Quanzhou and take charge of the temple in Manila. Liren stayed until 1999, when he was recalled to Quanzhou and eventually became the abbot there. The temple's lay board, using Yuanguo's contacts in Hong Kong, invited Zhengzhe to take charge of the temple in 2001. Zhengzhe was abbot of his own temple in Hong Kong, Jile Si , but since 1997, had also taken over the Buddha Light Temple in Cebu, founded by a Dharma brother of his master in Fujian, Shanyang. In 2003, he also accepted responsibility for the Bun Su Temple in Pasay. Thus, although largely based in Hong Kong, he became abbot of three temples in the Philippines.

Main Buildings

The present buildings were built by Zhengzhe when he took over the temple in 2001. On the street level is a parking lot, and two floors were built above it. The second floor houses the shrine to Guanyin and the ancestral altar, while the third floor enshrines the Buddhas of the five directions.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Zhengzhe is not always in residence, but seven monks reside here and manage the temple activities. Among the Buddhist feast days, they emphasize the three-day chanting of the thousand names of the Buddha from the thirteenth to the fifteenth of the first lunar month.

The regular chanting assembly of the temple's devotees is held on the first Sunday of each month. The temple also manages a charity fund in order to respond to relief work during times of natural calamity.

Resident monks with special skills make their services available to the community. One monk operates a Chinese medicine clinic, and another offers Shaolin kung fu classes at the Bun Su Temple.

5. Hai En Temple (Haiyin Si)

Contact Information

2443 Severino Reyes St., Sta. Cruz, City of Manila

Tel. 02 2540550; 2510625

History

A temple of the same name existed in Gucha, Quanzhou , where the caigu Yuanjing , born in 1930, lived since age five. In 1948, she went to the Nanputuo Temple (Nanputuo Si) in Xiamen and took the bodhisattva vows under Xingyuan, who sent her for training at the Juehua Buddhist Institute (Juehua Foxueyuan) that he founded especially for the formation of caigu. In 1957, she traveled to Hong Kong and three years later, Xingyuan invited her to come to Manila together with another caigu, Zhengyi . They first assisted Xingyuan at the Seng Guan Temple. In 1962, after the death of Xingyuan, Ruimiao invited them to reside at the Che Wan Temple, where they stayed until 1968.

Yuanjing and Zhengyi rented an apartment along Reina Regente Street in 1968, where they maintained a small chapel and gathered a lay community around their spiritual practice. By 1976, the community had grown and a couple of old buildings on Severino Reyes Street were purchased and named after Yuanjing's original temple in Quanzhou. The two caigu accepted the guidance of monks from Seng Guan temple, who helped them convert the old buildings into proper temple facilities.

The work was completed only in 1987, although the community had been living there since 1976. In 2015, there were ten caigu living there under the leadership of Yuanjing, and one nun who, with her sister, grew up in the temple.

Main Buildings

The temple has three floors. The ancestral hall and the refectory are on the ground floor, and the main shrine to the Buddhas is upstairs. There are also smaller altars to Guanyin and Maitreya.

Leadership and Primary Activities

At first, Yuanjing asked Xingyuan to be the titular abbot of the temple, but after his death she assumed the leadership role in the temple, assisted by Zhengyi. The temple took in several young girls left at the temple by their families for various reasons. The girls were brought up in the Buddhist environment of the temple but were not obliged to become monastics when they grew up.

The caigu Chongcheng and the nun Zongdao , both of this temple, work at the Philippine Academy of Sakya. The latter grew up in the temple, but Chongcheng grew up in a Buddhist family in Manila and became a caigu as an adult.

Yuanjing had a special devotion to Bodhisattva K itigarbha, a.k.a. the Earth Store Bodhisattva. The temple devotees gather on the 28th of every lunar month to chant this bodhisattva’s sutra, with the major celebration on the 28th of the seventh month, his feast day. Other feastdays in the Buddhist calendar are also duly marked.

6. Holy Buddhist Temple (Guanyin Si)

Contact Information

150 N. Domingo St., Cubao, Quezon City

Tel. 02 7267696; 7259138

History

The present temple building dates from 1975, but the community is much older. The temple traces its roots to a statue of Guanyin brought to Manila by a Cantonese merchant in 1881, who built a private shrine in the Bangkusay district of Manila. Responsibility for the shrine passed on to a man surnamed Shi , and then to a Dai Yangdan , who moved the shrine to Sto. Cristo Street. Caigu Youzhan was put in charge in 1937. She was succeeded in 1945 by another caigu, Sanglian (1904–1988). Throughout this time, the shrine was not formally Buddhist. Folk religion was practiced and Dai was a Daoist of the Xiantian tradition. Sanglian began as his disciple but later took refuge as a Buddhist under Ruijin.

Sanglian bought the property in Cubao in 1956, but construction of the new temple began only in 1973. It opened in 1975. Meanwhile, Sanglian had taken in a five year-old granddaughter (by an adopted son) in 1956. The child, Miaozhen , grew up as a caigu. She was educated in Manila at the Philippine Academy of Sakya and Chiang Kai-shek College. When Sanglian died in 1988, Miaozhen became the temple's abbess. In 1993, she traveled to California's City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to train and be ordained under Xuanhua . From then on, she was known as Hengji .

Hengji organized many educational and charitable activities and gained a solid reputation as a leader. The charity clinic was established in 1987 through the leadership of a lay devotee, Wang Liumin .

In 2011, the temple celebrated its 130th anniversary.

The temple is closely linked to the Manila Buddha Temple and its branch in the north, the Baguio Buddha Temple. Hengji served as caretaker of the two latter temples in the 1980s when her grandmother was still alive and there was no one to take care of the two temples after the monk-founders died. At present, the male monastics from the Manila Buddha Temple often help with the chanting at this temple.

Main Buildings

The main building houses the shrine to Guanyin and a refectory. Behind it is a memorial hall dedicated to Sanglian, an ancestral hall, and a dormitory building. The Sanglian Memorial Hall links to an outdoor shed that serves as the waiting area for the temple's charity clinic organized twice a month.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Regular chanting is held on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, the Guanyin feast days, the Buddha's birthday, and the year-end assembly. Many other feast days are observed, but the temple is unique for two spiritual practices. First, the regular chanting lasts only one hour, followed by a lecture and a vegetarian lunch. This is meant to balance chanting with education, and this temple is one of only two temples in the Philippines that does this religiously (the other is Un Siu Temple). Second, since 1996, starting on the first day of the eighth lunar month, the temple chants the Medicine Buddha sutra for forty-nine consecutive days for the peace and well-being of the nation. This is done at 8:00 A.M. and many lay devotees come to participate before starting their workday.

7. Hwa Chong Temple (Huazang Si)

Contact Information

Northern Polytech, University Hills Subdivision, Potrero, Malabon City

Tel. 02 3610503; 3624150

History

This temple was founded by the acknowledged originator of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, Xingyuan. After building Seng Guan Temple in downtown Manila, he felt that another temple with more grounds was needed for the propagation of Buddhism. He bought the Malabon property in 1942, construction began in 1951, and the temple opened in 1953. A number of buildings were added as the years progressed, such that the place became the largest Buddhist temple complex in the Philippines. Aside from the main temple building, there is a large columbary, ancestral halls, dining hall, and various multi-purpose rooms. The adjacent school, named the Philippine Buddhist Shing Guan Memorial Institute, was established in 1970. In another adjacent property, a home for the aged with 108 individual rooms and a cultural resource center were also built.

While it was Xingyuan who had the vision to start the temple, it was Miaojue who executed the plans and oversaw the construction of many buildings, including a memorial pagoda for Xingyuan when the latter died in 1962 (see entry on Po Lian Temple for more details about Miaojue).

Main Buildings

The temple gives the impression of being a park, although it is accessible only through a residential village. The entrance leads to a large plaza. The columbary is to the far left, and the pagoda to Xingyuan is on the right. The main temple

building occupies the center of the property, and behind it is a garden with two large ponds. The school lies further behind. The ancestral and dining halls, dormitories, and other facilities are in buildings on both sides of the main temple. The home for the aged and cultural resource center are across the narrow street.

On Sundays and holidays, elderly Chinese can be seen using the temple grounds as a park for exercise, fellowship, and Chinese chess games.

Leadership and Primary Activities

For many years, there was only one abbot for both Seng Guan and Hwa Chong Temples. After Xingyuan, the famous reformer monk Yinshun was abbot of both temples for a brief period from 1958 to 1960. Ruijin, who was instrumental in the construction of many temples in the Philippines, was also abbot for many years (1962 to 1974, 1986–1990). Hongchuan , famous for his work in Fujian and Singapore, was abbot for a period of twelve years (1974–1986). In 1990, Hwa Chong began to have its own abbot in the person of Zhenyi , a disciple of Miaojue. He and his two Dharma brothers are in charge of the temple up to the present day.

All the Buddhist feast days are marked at this temple, but some chanting assemblies are especially highlighted. The three Guanyin feast days are marked on the twenty-first of the month rather than the actual feast day (ninth), so as not to compete with Seng Guan and other temples. The Qingming festival to honor the dead in April is observed with a three-day chanting assembly. On the seventh month, also a time dedicated to praying for the deceased, there is an assembly on the twenty-seventh day. On the last Sunday of the tenth month, the thousand names of the Buddha are chanted. There are also assemblies to mark the beginning and end of each lunar year.

In early November, the traditional Filipino time for remembering the dead, the complex is visited by thousands of people who come to honor the dead whose ashes are interred in the columbary.

The complex houses an impressive array of buildings, perhaps more than is actually needed. The home for the aged and cultural resource center, for example, function on a very small scale and many rooms are not actually used.

The temple has collaborated with other groups like the Miao De Bodhisattva Society to organize activities using the temple facilities.

8. Hwat Kong Temple (Fakong Si)

Contact Information

19 Guirayan St., Sta. Mesa, City of Manila

History

This temple formally opened in 2010. It used to be known as the Zhengfaming Buddhist Hall (Zhengfaming Fotang), opened in 2000 by a group of devotees who used to be connected to the Daoist Kim Luan Temple (Jinluan Yuyuan), but started their own group to practice Buddhism. In 2006, differences within the lay board of the young temple led to a split and the Chinese Buddhist side built their own temple at the present site. The other side follows Tibetan Buddhism and retained the old site at Piña Avenue. The prime mover behind this temple is Chua Kopo (Cai Kebao), who is a spirit medium for the Song dynasty monk and Living Buddha Jigong (Jigong Huofo). The devotees of this temple are mostly people who have consulted Mr Chua and found his mediation of Jigong's advice effective.

Daoyuan of the Manila Buddha Temple has been guiding Mr Chua spiritually, and trying to transform the temple along more orthodox Buddhist lines. A few monks have stayed at this temple for short periods, but Hengpeng , who had spent time at other temples and was known to offer martial arts classes, is the first to stay more permanently.

Main Buildings

There is only one air-conditioned hall, where all the usual statues can be found. Maitreya, flanked by miniature images of the four heavenly kings, is by the main entrance. At the central altar of the hall are the usual three Buddhas, but in front of Sākyamuni is the Zhengfaming Rulai Buddha , to whom this community is specially devoted. In front of Zhengfaming Rulai is an image of Jigong. Guanyin

and the other main bodhisattvas are also represented.

An air-conditioned dining hall can be found at the back of the main hall.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Chua provides consultancy services every Sunday afternoon, and devotees believe that constant chanting is required to keep his spiritual powers optimal. Thus, aside from his private spiritual practice at home, the community gathers every Sunday afternoon to chant the Great Compassion Spell 108 times. On other days, the community's lay leader comes for a few hours each morning to chant the Śūra gama Spell (Lengyan Zhou).

Charitable activities are part of the community's life. Two or three times a year, they prepare food packs and distribute these to the poor, usually through Catholic institutions like the neighborhood parish.

9. Kim Sha Temple (Jinsha Si)

Contact Information

1021 Upper Ongpin Street, Sta. Cruz, City of Manila

Tel. 02 7336916

History

This temple was built by lay devotees to honor Bodhisattva Guanyin. In 1955, a Guanyin image from Mount Putuo was brought to Manila from the Kim Sha Temple in Shishi. Shi Houjin was in charge, and he began by renting a small room on Ongpin Street in which the devotions to Guanyin could be carried out. The number of devotees grew and the present building was completed in 1990. Zili of Un Siu Temple presided over its formal opening in 1993.

Main Buildings

The temple occupies only one floor of the six-storey building. The central shrine is dedicated to Guanyin, and on the sides are smaller altars to Tiangong and Amitābha Buddha.

Leadership and Primary Activities

The temple is administered by a lay board of directors that selects a Chairman every two years. The present Chairman is Shi Zhide , the son of Shi Houjin.

Monastics from other temples are invited to come and lead chanting assemblies. The main assemblies are on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, the Guanyin feast days which they mark on the twenty-fourth of the month, and the Buddha’s enlightenment on the eighth of the twelfth month. Every Christmas,

the community prepares about five hundred gift bags and distributes these to the poor.

10. Lian Hwa Temple (Lianhua Si)

Contact Information

26 Industrial Avenue, Marcelo Compound, Potrero, Malabon City

Tel. 02 3620737

History

Originally known as the Lian Hwa Vihara, this temple traces its origins to the 1950s, when seven lay Buddhist women put their resources together and built a house where they could live and practice Buddhism. A caigu named Huixiang managed the place. When she died in 1961, Miaozong and Miaoshu , both also caigu, took over its management. More than two decades earlier, Miaozong and Miaoshu had been entrusted to the care of Huixiang at the Shoushan Hall (Shoushan Tang) in Yongchun , Fujian. They grew up as sisters and received Buddhist education at institutes in Quanzhou. They went to the Philippines upon the invitation of Jueding , an older brother of Huixiang.

The vihara needed a sturdier structure, so an association was formed to build a new temple. Jueding, in Manila since 1939 when Xingyuan invited him to help at Seng Guan Temple, was asked to serve as the abbot. Miaojue of Hwa Chong Temple was requested to help with the design; Miaozong and Miaoshu supervised the work. The new place, renamed Lian Hwa Temple, opened in 1976.

Jueding died in 1996. Miaoshu took over the leadership and shaved her head in 1999 to become ordained as a nun. Ruijin presided over the ordination ceremony, but Miaoshu recognized Jueding posthumously as her ordination master.

Main Buildings

There are two buildings. The main building has two floors: the ground floor for the Guanyin shrine and ancestral hall, and the second floor with a high ceiling for the main shrine to the three Buddhas. The building at the back houses the dining room, kitchen, and dormitories.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Miaoshu, aged 86, still heads the temple. Another nun, a local-born Chinese, also lives there along with lay women serving in the temple.

The eighteenth of the lunar month is the temple's unique devotion day. Feast days of each month are always celebrated on the 18th, with special emphasis on the first month for the new year, the fourth month for the Buddha's birthday, and the seventh month to pray for the dead. Apart from the 18th, the Guanyin feast days are marked on the fifteenth of the second, sixth, and ninth months. The temple's anniversary is observed on the 27th of the eighth month with the chanting of the Buddha's thousand names.

A regular group of forty to one hundred devotees attend these assemblies. Occasionally, charitable activities are organized, especially in cooperation with other temples.

11. Mabuhay Temple

(Manila Foguangshan Wannian Si)

Contact Information

656 P. Ocampo Street, Malate, City of Manila

Tel. 02 523 4909; 5253680

Website: http://www.mabuhaytemple.com/

History

This temple, the most modern one in the Philippines, belongs to the international network of Foguangshan , founded by Xingyun in Taiwan. The Foguangshan congregation's nuns first arrived in the central Philippines, taking charge of temples in Cebu and Bacolod. In 1992, upon the invitation of devotees in Manila, Yongguang traveled from Cebu to Manila and started a small Chan center (Manila Chanjing Zhongxin) in a leased apartment along Alonzo Street in the city's Chinatown. The following year, Foguangshan's overseas affairs unit visited Manila and decided that there was great potential for the growth of Buddhism. The present property on Pablo Ocampo Street was purchased, including an old building that used to be the Russian Embassy. This became the center of Foguangshan's activities in Manila. Regular Dharma assemblies and cultural and charitable activities led to the growth of the community, until the decision was taken to build a new structure. The present ten-storey building opened in 2010.

Foguangshan is a highly organized institution. The monastic community of nuns takes charge of the temple and its many activities, but their lay arm is organized into different chapters of the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA). In Metro Manila, there are about ten local chapters and each one organizes its own activities centered around the temple's. For example, BLIA members may celebrate the Buddha's birthday for the public in their local area, but they would

also take part in the bigger celebration organized by the temple. The different chapters are nationally federated and a national board of directors is elected every two years.

The temple is known today as the Mabuhay Temple or in Chinese. Mabuhay is a Filipino greeting meaning “long live” and the Chinese name literally means “10,000 years,” an expression used to hail the emperor during imperial times and which evokes the sense of Buddhism’s eternal value.

Main Buildings

Unlike traditional temples, the modern structure looks more like an office building. A small sign on the gate and a statue of Guanyin by the lobby are the only indications that it is a Buddhist temple. The ground floor has a reception area, exhibition hall, dining hall, tea house, and meeting rooms. The main shrine is on the second floor, where large statues of the three Buddhas are enshrined. The third to tenth floors house the museum and art gallery, meditation hall, lecture rooms, audiovisual room, library, and separate floors for Chinese and English education.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Foguangshan’s temples and centers in the Philippines are headed by one monastic. In 2015, it was Yongguang , assisted by several nuns. Miaojing is in charge only of the Mabuhay Temple. All the monastics speak some English and are able to communicate with both Chinese and non-Chinese, although 80 percent of the devotees are ethnic Chinese.

The temple holds regular Dharma assemblies, including some in English. The weekly chanting assembly is on Saturday evening, and Sunday morning assemblies have varying content. The first and the fifteenth of the lunar month are also marked with Dharma assemblies.

Aside from Dharma assemblies, the temple organizes a wide variety of religious, cultural, educational, and charitable activities. There are English and Chinese study groups, vegetarian cooking lessons, Taiji classes, film viewings, and

Buddhist camps that last for a few months using the facilities of the temples in Cebu and Bacolod. A vocational school (Budhi Learning Institute) has opened in Manila, an Academy for the Performing Arts in Cebu, and a Humanistic Academy of Life and Arts in Bacolod. Students are recruited from around the country for non-degree programs that last from three to ten months, all free of charge. In 2014, the Guang Ming College opened on the premises and offered bachelor's degrees in Buddhist Studies, Theater, and Performing Arts (Dance). More information is available on their website.

12. Manila Buddha Temple (Putuo Si)

Contact Information

1155 Masangkay Street, Sta. Cruz, Manila

Tel. 02 2547901; 2548645

History

Ruman , the founder of this temple, first came to Manila in 1939 upon the invitation of Xingyuan for him to assist at Seng Guan Temple. During his time there, he compiled a Dharma service or liturgy for chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha (Nianfo Yigui) that is still in use today at most of the temples in the Philippines. In 1948, he decided to rent his own place on Alonzo Street and named it the Buddha Temple (Putuo Si). He also invited his Dharma brother, Ruyi , to come from China and assist him. The temple's present site was bought in 1951 and construction was completed in 1958. Ruman served as the abbot and in 1969, also built the Baguio Buddha Temple. Ruyi became the abbot there. Both monks died in 1983. After a period of searching, the temple's board of directors arranged for a succession of monks to take charge of both temples (Xinli from 1984 to 1991, and Tiwen from 1991 to 1996), until the present abbot, Daoyuan , came for an indefinite stay. Since 1984, both temples have been headed by only one abbot.

Main Buildings

The temple has only one building with three floors. The ground floor entrance has the shrine to Maitreya and leads to an open area. The second floor has the ancestral hall, shrine to K itigarbha, and the dining area. The main shrine to the three Buddhas is on the third floor, along with the monks' quarters at the back.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Since 1996, Daoyuan, who came to Manila at age 33, has initiated many cultural activities. A painter, he has organized many cycles of free painting and calligraphy lessons. He published a picture book of his own artworks, established a Buddhist cultural association, and started a monthly magazine called Buddhism in the Philippines (Feidao Fojiao) in 2006. He and his assisting monk, Guangzhi , have maintained good relations with Taiwanese groups like Ciji and Foguangshan, as well as temples run by nuns such as Un Siu and Holy Buddhist, where they frequently lead Dharma assemblies that have to be led by male monastics.

Manila Buddha Temple’s regular chanting day is the 29th of the lunar month, and the devotion is usually to Samantabhadra bodhisattva. The Guanyin feasts are observed on the 16th of the corresponding months, in order not to compete with other temples, especially Seng Guan Temple which is located nearby. Other highlighted feasts are those of Samantabhadra (lunar 2/21), the Buddha’s birthday (observed on lunar 4/6), the Yulanpen Festival (observed on lunar 7/10–12), the Mid-autumn Festival (chanting the Buddha’s thousand names on lunar 8/13–14), and the year-end assembly (observed on lunar 12/29).

13. Ocean Sky Chan Monastery (Haitian Chan Si)

Contact Information

716 J. Abad Santos Street, San Juan City

Tel. 02 7236132; 7260600

Website: http://oceanskyzen.org/introduction_oscm.html

History

This is a branch temple of the Zhongtaishan (a.k.a. Chung Tai) Chan Monastery (Zhongtaishan Chan Si) in Puli , Central Taiwan, founded by Weijue in 1987. The grand monastery of Zhongtaishan was inaugurated in 2001, and a Philippine delegation was present. The delegation, headed by Jose de Venecia, Jr., was so moved by the place and the ceremonies that they invited Zhongtaishan to open a branch in the Philippines. A five-storey building was built in Little Baguio, San Juan City. In 2002, two monks arrived and supervised the design and construction of the building's interiors. Chan classes and chanting assemblies began in 2003.

Main Buildings

The ground floor houses a modest shrine to the three Buddhas, a reception, and a dining hall. The second floor has a classroom and audiovisual room, library, offices, and Chan lineage wall. The meditation hall is on the third floor, and the upper floors are the monastics' living quarters.

Leadership and Primary Activities

In 2015, there were four nuns serving at the temple, headed by Jianshu . With a

small group of volunteers, they organize numerous activities, the most regular of which are basic, intermediate, and advanced classes in Buddhism and Chan meditation, offered in both English and Chinese. There is a weekly chanting assembly/repentance ceremony held on Saturday evenings, and morning assemblies on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month. Other feast days are also marked, and throughout the year, one-day Chan recollections are organized on Sundays. More advanced devotees are invited to attend an annual seven-day retreat at the Zhongtaishan monastery in Taiwan.

Every summer, free summer camps for children are organized for different age groups. Each lasts several days and includes classes in martial arts, art, and meditation.

14. Poh Chong Temple (Baozang Si)

Contact Information

35 C. Benitez Street, Cubao, Quezon City

Tel. 02 7252066

History

This temple was built in 1948 by the caigu Xiuyin , soon after the end of the Second World War. She was born in Hui'an , Fujian, and became a caigu at the age of 18. She arrived in the Philippines in 1929 and engaged in personal spiritual practice in Cabanatuan and Manila until she could buy land in Cubao, Quezon City, in 1947. The area was still undeveloped and devotees would come from downtown Manila and consider it an excursion. More facilities, including a small park with a pond and a pagoda, were built in the 1960s.

Xiuyin passed away in 1968 and another caigu, Shuzhen , took over. She was a relative of Xiuyin, also from Hui'an, and was invited by Xiuyin to come to Manila in 1960. In 1977, Shuzhen shaved her head and became the nun Zhengdao in a ceremony where the monk Zhengzong presided. In 1984, Zhengdao began a long-term project to rebuild the main temple building. She raised the money without approaching major benefactors, and took ten years to finish the project.

Main Buildings

The temple is accessed through C. Benitez Street, but the gate opens to the back of the temple. The entrance to the temple building faces a creek, and feng shui principles dictated that the water must be "in front" and the "back" of the temple should be on more solid ground. The temple building's entrance is therefore a very serene place, looking out to a garden with a pagoda, and a pond where two

pavilions connected by a bridge was also built.

The main temple building has two floors. Maitreya and the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin are enshrined on the ground floor, and the three Buddhas are enshrined upstairs. A side building houses the ancestral hall and the monastics' quarters.

Leadership and Primary Activities

In 2015 there were three nuns at the temple, headed by Zhengdao. The temple has a small core of regular devotees, and Zhengdao is very cautious about allowing others to access the temple. The feast days highlighted at this temple are those of Guanyin and K itigarbha, and the beginning and end of the lunar year.

15. Seng Guan Temple (Xinyuan Si)

Contact Information

1176 Narra Street, Tondo, Manila

Tel. 02 2520792

History

In 1931, Wu Jiangliu and Wang Zhenwen founded the Guanyin Tong (Guanyin Tang), and offered his family shrine for common worship around the image of Guanyin. He later invited others to form the Chinese-Buddhist Society in the Philippines and purchased a plot of land in Narra Street for the purpose of building a temple. The temple was built in 1936, and Xingyuan was invited to come from Xiamen's Nanputuo temple the following year to serve as the congregation's first abbot. Being the first temple to have a resident monastic, Seng Guan is considered the first Buddhist temple in the Philippines, and Xingyuan the originator of Chinese Buddhism in the country, although it must be noted that the groundwork for the temple came entirely from the lay believers.

The temple survived the war, but not a fire in 1949 that gutted the temple's wooden buildings. The large statues of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas were not damaged by the fire, and this was considered miraculous by the devotees, who then spent the next two years building a sturdier concrete structure. More buildings were constructed in the succeeding years, by which time Xingyuan had invited several more monks from Xiamen to join him in Manila.

Xingyuan was abbot until 1948, when he asked Ruijin to take over as abbot and he concentrated on building the Hwa Chong Temple in Malabon. Ruijin was responsible for much of the temple's building expansions. In 1958, the eminent monk Yinshun visited from Taiwan. Xingyuan invited him to be the abbot of both Seng Guan and Hwa Chong temples. Yinshun served in this capacity for two years. The abbotship returned to Xingyuan in 1960 until his death in 1962.

Ruijin was abbot of both temples from 1962 to 1974, and again from 1986 to 1990. From 1990 to 2005, he was abbot of only Seng Guan, as the two temples began having separate abbots in 1990.

The abbot from 1974 to 1986 was Hongchuan , originally from Fujian but serving in Singapore when he was invited to become abbot, serving the maximum continuous term of twelve years.

Since 2005, a nephew of Ruijin, Chuanyin , has been the abbot.

While the succession of abbots provides a sense of how leadership has been passed on, it must also be noted that abbots often had to attend to temples in Taiwan, Fujian, or Singapore as well. The other monks and the lay associations that were stable presences at Seng Guan kept the regular activities going.

Main Buildings

Located in a dense part of Tondo near Chinatown, the Seng Guan Temple is a complex of three buildings supplemented by an annex building connected to the temple by a bridge on the second floor. The central building has two worship halls. The bodhisattvas Guanyin, flanked by Mañjusrī and Samantabhadra, are enshrined on the ground floor, where large numbers of devotees come to carry out their private devotions and many aspects of popular religion are practiced. On the second floor is the shrine to the three Buddhas, where the chanting assemblies are held. The building on the right has the kitchen and dining room, a special chapel to the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin, an air-conditioned multipurpose hall, and the monastics' living quarters.

The building on the left is the main ancestral hall where K itigarbha is also enshrined. The upper floor is a large, high-ceilinged, air-conditioned hall where a large statue of the Medicine Buddha is enshrined. The roof of this building is a stupa with 10,000 small images of the Buddha.

The annex building across the street has a carpark, more ancestral halls including an indoor stupa with the remains of Ruijin, a library and meditation hall, classrooms, and dormitories.

In 2015, to mark the tenth anniversary of Ruijin's death, construction of a

memorial hall, situated behind the Medicine Buddha Hall, facing Padre Algue Street began.

Leadership and Primary Activities

About ten monks reside in the temple. The numbers are fluid because some monks stay for short periods before they move on to other temples. The abbot, Chuanyin, is also in charge of temples in Fujian and divides his time between the two places. The temple has an active board of directors and lay associations that manage many of the temple activities.

The monastics organize the weekly Sunday morning one-hour chanting assembly, and the longer assemblies to mark all the Buddhist feast days. Since this temple is the oldest one with a monastic community, it is conventionally considered the headquarters of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines and other temples try not to compete with its schedule of assemblies. On Lunar New Year's eve, the temple is open all night for the thousands of devotees who come to light their first incense for the year. Several hundred devotees attend the major assemblies during the New Year, feasts of Guanyin, and the Yulanpen Festival for the dead during the seventh month.

Two lay associations organize weekly activities. The Seng Guan Buddhist Society (Foxue She) runs a Sunday school for children and teenagers divided into three age groups, teaching Buddhism and Chinese culture using Hokkien Chinese as the medium of instruction. The Society also carries out charitable activities several times a year.

The Meditation Group (Jingxiu Ban) has a two-hour session every Sunday afternoon that combines sitting and walking meditation with a short lecture. Once a year, when the country goes on a Holy Week holiday, the group organizes a four-day retreat at the temple. The senior and learned monk Zhengzhong is the inspiration behind this group. He has published several books and CDs of his talks from a radio show that he produced in the 1980s.

16. Soc Yan Temple (Suyan Si)

Contact Information

1404 F. Guerrero Street, Tondo, City of Manila

Tel. 02 2516916; 2520835

History

This temple's origins can be traced to the caigu of one family. Yangjia was born in Jinjiang in 1872, married at the age of 18, and had two daughters. Widowed at 22, she raised her daughters for a few years and then, following the custom of the time, arranged their marriages in a neighboring village. This meant entrusting her daughters to their future husbands' families. She retired to a cave dwelling in Xiaowushishan and carried out her private spiritual practice there. She later established the Soc Yan Temple (Suyan Si) in the same place.

Meanwhile, her two daughters both grew up, married, and had one daughter each. Both were also widowed early and brought their daughters to join Yangjia at the Soc Yan Temple. Wenlian was born in 1911, and Huangji in 1926. Wenlian was fifteen years the senior of Huangji, but the two were very close and grew up as caigu at their maternal grandmother's temple. By 1939, Wenlian was of age and took charge of the temple upon her mother's death. Yangjia had died in 1933.

Times were hard and Wenlian decided to go and beg for alms in Manila. Unable to return home because of Japanese aggression in Asia leading to World War II, she remained in Manila under the guidance of Xingyuan. In 1941, she had already gathered a few women around her to practice Buddhism. She returned to Fujian to repair her own temple in 1947, and then went back to Manila in 1949 to start building the Soc Yan Temple. It opened in 1952 with Wenlian as the first abbess. Wenlian soon invited her younger cousin Huangji to come and help her, but it was only in 1958 that Huangji arrived after a two-year stopover in Hong Kong to arrange her travel papers.

Wenlian died of a cerebral hemorrhage in early 1960, at age 49. Huangji invited Ruijin of Seng Guan Temple to be the honorary abbot of the temple, while she managed day-to-day affairs. In the next ten years, she carried out several improvements in the temple, including a renovation of the main shrine in 1970. Wanting to memorialize Wenlian's concern for the poor, the temple community opened a charity clinic in 1978 as the Soc Yan Temple Bon Lian (Hokkien for Wenlian) Charity Clinic, housed in a four-storey building on Narra Street.

In 1980, Huangji was ordained by Ruijin, taking the Dharma name Guangren . When Ruijin died in 2005, Guangren took over as abbess of the temple until her death in December 2011 at the age of 85.

At present, the temple is headed by Guangming , who was ordained in Taiwan and has been teaching the classes on Buddhism at the Philippine Academy of Sakya and Samantabhadra Institute.

Main Buildings

The building has three floors, with the Maitreya shrine, ancestral hall, and refectory on the ground floor, the main shrine to the three Buddhas and a chapel to K itigarbha on the second floor, and living quarters on the third floor.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Four nuns and four caigu live at the temple, five of whom are local Chinese women who were taken in and raised at the temple from a young age.

The temple is known as a women's temple, with a special devotion to K itigarbha. The monthly devotion day is the sixth day of the lunar month. The Guanyin feast days are observed on the actual dates, and the end of the lunar New Year is marked with a three-day chanting of the thousand names of the Buddha.

17. Thousand Buddha Temple (Puji Chan Si)

Contact Information

15 Don Jose corner Maria Clara Street, Quezon City

Tel. 02 7425556; 7124713

E-mail: thousand.buddha.temple@gmail.com

Website: https://peacefullife1000.wordpress.com/

History

The temple was founded by Guangchun , who became a disciple of Ruijin when the latter was based at the Chengtian Temple (Chengtian Si) in Quanzhou in 1937. He trained at temples in Jinjiang, Fuzhou, and Hong Kong until Ruijin asked him to go to Manila in 1957 to join the monastic community at Seng Guan Temple. He spent twenty years in Seng Guan, and in 1976 purchased land in Quezon City, founding this temple the following year. The temple developed its facilities over the next ten years and attracted many devotees who found its location in Quezon City a strong alternative to Seng Guan and other temples in downtown Manila.

Guangchun has both male and female disciples from China, Taiwan, and the Philippines, thus the presence of both male and female monastics in the temple.

In 1994, Guangchun also founded the Philippine Buddhacare Academy across the street from the temple.

Guangchun died in December 2010, and was succeeded by his Dharma sister, the nun Guangxue.

Main Buildings

The first building to be constructed in 1980 enshrines an image of Vairocana Buddha flanked by 1,000 small images of Guanyin, thus the temple's English name. The ground floor is the dining hall and shrine to the eighteen arhats (luohan) of Chinese Buddhism, the Medicine Buddha, and the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin.

The main inspiration of the temple is the Mount Putuo Guanyin, thus, the Chinese name takes after the main temple on Mount Putuo. The second building is dedicated to Guanyin and is where the chanting assemblies are held. An ancestral hall is located on the ground floor, and the monastics' quarters are on the third floor.

The third and most recent building is a three-storey columbary, with individual stupas on the roof.

The temple often uses facilities at the Philippine Buddhacare Academy. The charity clinic's permanent offices are in fact located in the school.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Until his death in December 2010, Guangchun led the temple assisted by Guangxue , who is now in charge. Regular assemblies are held on Sundays and all the major feast days, especially those for the dead during the Qingming and Yulanpen festivals. This is partly due to the presence of the columbary and the devotees' desire to offer prayers for the dead. The temple is also located near several funeral homes, so the monastics are kept busy responding to the requests of Chinese families for chanting assemblies at the funeral homes.

Lay devotees are quite active. They operate a medical and dental clinic twice a month, Sunday school, children's summer camp, and seasonal charitable activities. A women's group meets monthly for chanting, fellowship, and organization of activities. Lectures and discussion groups are held occasionally, especially when there are visiting monastics from other countries.

18. Tien Tiok Am (Tianzhu An)

Contact Information

1319 Narra corner Padre Algue Street, Tondo, City of Manila

Tel. 02 2533363

History

During the Cultural Revolution in China, a Guanyin statue from the Tian Tiok Am in Gupo Zhuang , Jinjiang, was brought to Manila by a devotee. A small room rented on Soler Street was used as a chapel. As devotees increased in number, a board of directors was formed and plans were made to build a bigger shrine. Under the leadership of Wu Jinzhen and his wife, the shrine on Narra Street was built, opening in 1984, and was formally inaugurated in 1986.

Main Buildings

The modest building has two floors. The ground floor has an open area that serves as a dining hall, with a small kitchen at the back. The shrine to Guanyin is on the second floor, with an altar to the Jade Emperor facing the balcony.

Leadership and Primary Activities

A lay board of directors manages the place and invites a caigu to reside and care for the place. The first caigu, Yangmo , was invited from Hwa Chong Temple. In 2015, Yamiao was in charge.

Every fourth day of the lunar month, a monk from Hwa Chong Temple comes to lead a chanting assembly. The feast days of Guanyin, Sākyamuni Buddha, Medicine Buddha, and Maitreya are also marked with chanting assemblies. On

other devotion days like the first and fifteenth of the month, many devotees come for private devotions.

Twice a year, charitable activities are carried out at orphanages or homes for the aged. Every two years, the board of directors organizes a pilgrimage to Mount Putuo.

19. Tian Lian Temple (Tianlian Si)

Contact Information

678 A. Bonifacio Road, Balintawak, Quezon City

Tel. 02 3614598

History

This temple was founded by the caigu Xiuqin , who became a caigu at the Tianlian Temple in Quanzhou in 1932, taking Xingyuan as her master. Upon the latter's invitation, she went to Manila in 1958 to serve at Hwa Chong Temple, where she stayed for almost twenty years. In 1976, wanting to memorialize her temple of origin, she decided to build a Tianlian Temple in Manila. The inauguration was held in 1978.

Xiuqin died in 2002, and her disciple Haomin took over as abbess of the temple. Haomin had been given up by her parents at the age of three and grew up under the care of Xiuqin. She studied at a Buddhist institute in Taiwan and renounced under Kuanyan of the Fuhui Hall (Fuhui Jiangtang) in Singapore.

Haomin is also the abbess of the Tian Lian Temple in Quanzhou, and spends most of her time there. A number of caigu, including a niece of Xiuqin, takes care of the temple in Manila.

Main Buildings

The temple has two floors. The ancestral hall is on the ground floor, and the main shrine to the three Buddhas is on the second floor. A side building houses living quarters and other rooms.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Haomin is based in Quanzhou but visits the temple every year. The caigu Zhenyuan resides in and maintains the temple along with other caigu from China who may join her from time to time. There are no regular activities but private visits are welcomed.

20. Tsi Tiok Lin Vihara (Zizhulin Jingshe)

Contact Information

Room 702, 7th Floor, China Plaza Building,

1017 Tambacan Street, Sta. Cruz, City of Manila

Tel. 02 7044102

History

Located in a condominium building, this vihara was established by blood sisters —the nun Yonglin and the caigu Huiqing . Both were born in the village of Yongning in Shishi City (Shishi Shi Yongning Zhen), Fujian, to a devout Buddhist family. In 1997, Yonglin became a nun in Hong Kong at the age of 37, and had her ordination ceremony in India the following year. She is based in Hong Kong, but in 2000 helped her sister to start this vihara as a place for private practice. Their family has relations in the Philippines.

Main Buildings

The shrine hall in the condominium unit has a 7.2-meter tall seated Guanyin robed in white. The couplet at the entrance to the hall was composed by Ruijin. The other rooms are living quarters.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Huiqing resides here and helps in the chanting assemblies of other temples. No major chanting assemblies are held here but devotees are welcome. In 2010, a fund drive was organized in Manila to help build a five-storey Buddhist hall in Yongning.

21. Un Siu Temple (Yinxiu Si)

Contact Information

193 J. Teodoro cor. 6th Avenue, Grace Park, Caloocan City

Tel. 02 3619375; 3619376

History

This temple was founded by the caigu Qinghe , born in 1890 in Nan'an , Fujian, to a devout Buddhist family. She was vegetarian from birth, and became a caigu at the age of 14. She made a pilgrimage to Mount Putuo in 1911 and took refuge and the five precepts at the Un Siu (Yinxiu) Temple there. In 1915, she took the bodhisattva vows at the Puji Temple (Puji Si), also in Mount Putuo. She went to Manila in 1917 to collect alms, but decided to stay and propagate Buddhism. She brought a statue of Guanyin from the Un Siu Temple in Mount Putuo and established a small private shrine on Juan Luna Street.

The devotees increased in number, and in 1949 Qinghe bought the property in Caloocan to start a bigger temple. Construction and interior design took several years, and a major cause of delay was additional work necessitated by a neighboring fire that damaged parts of the new temple. The temple was finally completed in 1957.

In 1962, Qinghe invited Zili, who was teaching the Buddhist education classes at Samantabhadra Institute (Puxian Zhongxue, a primary and secondary private Buddhist school) to be the Master Teacher at her temple. The Taixu Lecture Hall (Taixu Jiangtang) inside the temple was established that year.

Zili was from Taizhou in Jiangsu Province. He did not speak the Hokkien dialect, only heavily accented Mandarin. He fled to Taiwan with other monks in 1949 and studied under Cihang . In 1954, Liu Meisheng , the Principal of Samantabhadra Institute in Manila, invited him to teach Buddhism at the institute.

When Qinghe died in 1980, Zili became the abbot. He undertook major renovation works in 1984 to improve all the shrines in the temple. He also started the Tze Hang (Cihang) Free Clinic in 1991.

Two of his former students at Samantabhadra Institute took vows under him and became the nuns Fajing and Falian .

Zili died in December 2010, and the two nuns continue to look after the temple and its activities.

Main Buildings

The building has two floors. The spacious and well-laid out ground floor has Maitreya and K itigarbha shrines at the entrance, flanked on both sides by ancestral altars—one for spirit tablets of the devotees' deceased relatives, and the other for the founder of the temple. The inner hall is the Taixu Lecture Hall which also doubles as the dining hall.

The shrine to the three Buddhas is on the second floor, and on the other end of the floor is the shrine to Guanyin, a sitting area, library, and offices. Living quarters are also on the second floor.

Leadership and Primary Activities

As Zili's health declined and especially after his death in December 2010, his disciple Fajing has been managing temple affairs together with Falian.

Aside from the first and fifteenth of each month, the twenty-third is the temple's unique devotion day, and major feast days of the month are usually observed on the twenty-third. The temple is unique for chanting that lasts only one hour, to give way to a short lecture before lunch is served. Carried out three times a month, this is a legacy of the learned monk Zili who wanted to facilitate Buddhist learning as against ritualistic Buddhism. Fajing and the lay devotees, all former students of Zili, take turns giving the lectures.

In the 1960s, the temple published a magazine called Cihang, but this was

discontinued when the government declared martial rule in 1972. Starting in 1997, the temple published several works by Zili for international distribution (see Sources Cited and References).

The Tze Hang charity clinic operates every Saturday.

22. Wan Tong Temple (Yuantong Si)

Contact Information

1020 Severino Reyes Street, Sta. Cruz, City of Manila

Tel. 02 7114957

History

This temple is dedicated to Guanyin and started as a private shrine on Lohagi Street near the San Fernando Bridge. It was maintained by lay devotees gathered around an image of Guanyin from Mount Putuo, brought to Manila in 1890 by a man surnamed Tan (Chen) . Devotees flocked to this shrine for more than fifty years, earning it the colloquial name “the Lohagi Guanyin.” In 1944, to escape Japanese attacks on the city, the shrine was moved to a safer place on Espeleta Street but continued to be known as the Lohagi Guanyin.

Years later, one of the devotees, Chen Jianmao , had the idea of transforming the shrine into a legitimate Buddhist temple with a monastic community. The devotees agreed and entrusted the matter without conditions to Ruijin. Ruijin purchased the property on Severino Reyes Street in 1981 and built a proper Guanyin temple, renaming it the Wan Tong Temple, after one of Guanyin’s many titles. The Chinese transliteration of “Lohagi” (Luxiayi) was installed above the temple’s main gate to memorialize the temple’s old name. Ruijin had the position of abbot, but invited his caigu disciples to take care of the temple’s daily affairs.

The temple community celebrated its centenary in 1990, and the 112th anniversary in 2002 was marked with a pilgrimage to Mount Putuo, which was participated in by 182 pilgrims.

When Ruijin died in 2005, the caigu Zhaoxin became the abbess.

Main Buildings

The original Guanyin statue, enshrined in Manila for more than 120 years, is now on the ground floor altar of the temple. Behind it is an ancestral altar where Ruijin is especially remembered. The open area on the ground floor is also the dining hall.

On the second floor is a larger shrine to the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Zhaoxin is now in her 80s. Two other caigu, Chuanzhen and Chuanxiu , assist her at the temple.

Chanting is organized for the beginning and end of the year, the Guanyin and K itigarbha feast days. Devotees of all ages continue to come, including new immigrants, because of the reputation for efficacy of the old Guanyin image.

B. LUZON

1. Baguio Buddha Temple (Biyao Putuo Si)

Contact Information

Assumption Road, Baguio City (near St. Louis University)

Tel. 074 6192594

History

Baguio, in the north of Luzon Island, is the country's summer capital. Its cool climate is very conducive for spiritual retreats, but for a long time, the city had no Buddhist temple where Buddhist monastics and devotees could stay. This prompted Ruman of the Manila Buddha Temple to purchase land in 1967 and begin construction of a temple. The project took several years and the temple was finally opened in 1978. While Ruman was the founder, his Dharma brother Ruyi was the first abbot. Both monks died in 1983. Since 1984, the Manila and Baguio Buddha Temples have had only one abbot heading both. A strong earthquake in 1990 heavily damaged the Baguio Buddha Temple, and reconstruction work took two years. Daoyuan has been in charge of this temple since 1996. In 2001, he invited Hengzhi , a Chinese-Filipino nun who had renounced and trained in California's City of Ten Thousand Buddhas under Xuanhua, to take charge of the temple's daily affairs. Since then, she has slowly improved the facilities and rented out to student boarders the rooms originally intended for retreats.

In the 1970s, Ruman succeeded in creating a Buddhist garden with a large statue of the Buddha in the city's Burnham Park. However, the predominantly Catholic population reacted negatively to the project, and the large statue was brought to the temple grounds.

Main Buildings

Like most buildings in Baguio, the temple is built on a hill. It is a tight complex of three buildings, plus the small park with the statue of the Buddha. There are numerous bedrooms owing to the original vision of the place as a Buddhist retreat house. The main shrine is in the central building, and there are three Italian white marble statues of the Buddha flanked by the bodhisattvas Mañjusrī and Samantabhadra. The ancestral hall and dining room is on a lower floor. Facing the main shrine, the building to the right has a hall with altars to K itigarbha, Guanyin, and Amitābha Buddha. A small Chan meditation room with a statue of Bodhidharma crowns the building. To the left of the main shrine is a pagoda with the cremated remains of Ruman and Ruyi.

Leadership and Primary Activities

There are no regular assemblies at the temple. People are free to come any day for their devotions, but there are not too many devotees because for a long time there was no resident monastic. After Ruyi's death and until Hengzhi arrived as the caretaker, the abbot of both temples has been based in Manila. Once a year in late March or early April, a few busloads of devotees come from Manila to chant the thousand names of the Buddha. This lasts from one to three days.

Hengzhi has focused on finding resources to improve the quality of the building's interiors. When this is finished and with the income from the student boarders, she hopes to initiate more activities to propagate Buddhism. She is serving as a kind of chaplain or prefect to the students, and has participated in interfaith activities at the nearby St. Louis University.

2. Ling Hong Temple (Lingfeng Si)

Contact Information

Gen. Luna Street, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija

Tel. 044 4631189

History

Like many communities in Manila, this one in Central Luzon started by gathering around an image of Guanyin and chanting together. In 1938, they invited Xingyuan to give them a lecture and at that time, the entire fifteen-member board of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce took refuge under him. Since their Guanyin shrine was no longer adequate, they decided to establish the Ling Hong Vihara (Lingfeng Jingshe) and invited Xingyuan to be the abbot. That same year, Xingyuan brought a bodhi plant from India and planted it on the property. The tree has survived to the present day. Xingyuan spent a few years in Cabanatuan to escape the effects of Japanese attack on Manila.

The lay board of directors was formally established only in 1972, and their first project was to construct a temple made of concrete to replace the old wooden structure. Huang Wenbao spearheaded this project.

In 1982, a women's association was organized by Xu Zhuang Liying .

The building to the side of the temple was built in 1986, and the vihara was renamed a temple in 1992. Renovations were carried out in 2006.

Xingyuan was the titular abbot until his death in 1962. For more than three decades following his death, there was no monastic residing in the temple, until the caigu An'an was invited to take charge of the temple. She had arrived in Manila in 1995 and was assisting Xinli at the Manila Buddha Temple.

Main Buildings

The spacious property has a garden, open air plaza, and a grotto to Guanyin on the side. The temple building is a bungalow with Amitābha Buddha having pride of place, flanked by his two attendant bodhisattvas. There is a basement which is used for storage. A two-storey building, rectangular in shape, lines the side of the property. It houses the ancestral hall, offices, community center, and living quarters.

Leadership and Primary Activities

A lay board of directors is elected every few years, but in 2011 the prime mover of the temple was Mr. William Lim. He subsidizes the monthly allowance of An’an, and donates whatever is lacking to keep the temple activities going.

The temple is mainly used for private devotions, but on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, a vegetarian noodle lunch is prepared and offered for free to anyone who cares to come. Once or twice a year, monastics are invited from Manila in order to have a more elaborate chanting assembly.

3. Miao De Chan Temple (Miaode Chan Si)

Contact Information

Metro Gate Tagaytay Estates Subdivision, Kaybagal, Tagaytay City

Mobile: 0917 8450742; 0922 8158893

History

It was the vision of Ruimiao, who had founded the Che Wan Temple in Manila and other temples in Taiwan and Hawaii, for Buddhism to be adapted to Philippine culture and propagated among native Filipinos. She did not live to realize this dream. Her disciple, Jingping , succeeded in carrying it forward.

Jingping was born in Zhanghua , Taiwan, in 1959. At the age of 18, she studied for a degree at a Buddhist institute in Taizhong . After completing her degree and working at the institute for a few years, she spent four years in personal practice at a mountain retreat in Nantou . In 1985, she met Ruimiao at the Wanfo Temple in Taizhong and decided to be ordained as her disciple. That same year, she went to Manila to assist at the Che Wan Temple.

Given her formal Buddhist education, she was qualified to teach and organize Buddhist classes. She did so with Hengji, using facilities of the Hwa Chong Temple in Malabon. She also served as Principal of Samantabhadra Institute in Cebu from 1999 to 2005. During this latter period, she was able to secure the property in Tagaytay City, and construction of the temple began in 2004. The temple formally opened in 2006.

Due to her links with Che Wan Temple, she is also nominally the abbess of that temple.

Main Buildings

The temple compound is located inside a quiet residential subdivision. A life-size statue of Amitābha Buddha greets visitors at the main entrance, and a circular uphill road leads to the temple buildings. The temple hall is at the center, flanked by the Miao De Buddhist Institute (Miaode Foxueyuan) building on the left, and the living quarters and refectory on the right. The three Buddhas are enshrined in the temple hall, and side chapels are dedicated to Guanyin, and K itigarbha. Behind the main shrine is a memorial altar with the bust of Ruimiao.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Jingping has been the abbess since 2006, and since 2011 she has had one nun-disciple and a few lay devotees assisting her in Tagaytay. There are not many regular devotees at the temple, but chanting is organized anyway at the beginning and end of the lunar year, the Guanyin and other selected Buddhist feastdays.

The Institute runs a residential summer program in April and May. University students—education majors—participate in the program. It is supported by affiliated lay associations. The Miao De Bodhisattva Society (Miaode Pusa Xuehui) introduces Buddhism to the students on two Sundays each month using rooms at the Hwa Chong Temple. The society also staffs a study center on Masangkay Street in Binondo, and a smaller center near the temple in Tagaytay. Various classes promoting the Confucian text for children, Dizigui , have been organized in English, Filipino, and Chinese, to student audiences in Manila and Tagaytay.

More than seventy-five students have graduated from the scholarship program, and at any one time there are about eighty who are doing university studies. The temple and its attached associations hope that these future teachers will play a role in introducing Buddhism to younger generations of Filipinos. The society also organizes a Vesak Day celebration at the Robinsons shopping mall in Manila every April.

4. Palawan Fayu Temple (Balawan Fayu Si)

Contact Information

Honda Bay, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

1725 Antonio Rivera Street, Tondo, City of Manila

Mobile: 0917-5348287 (Irene Go)

History

Palawan is a cluster of islands southwest of the Philippine archipelago. There are hardly any Chinese residing there, but the area is popular for its pristine beaches. At Honda Bay, near the capital city of Puerto Princesa, this temple was built and lavishly inaugurated in October 2010.

The main proponent of the temple is the forty-something Irene Go (Wu Wanzhen), who was born in China but has been in the Philippines for more than twenty years. She was not particularly religious growing up, but on a visit to Mount Putuo, interaction with the senior monk Miaoshan convinced her that it was Guanyin's desire to be venerated in the southwest Philippines. Through her interpretation of succeeding events, she discerned that Puerto Princesa was the place desired by Guanyin, and for more than ten years she maintained a makeshift shrine in the city's outskirts. She became friends with the mayor, and also put up a shrine to Guanyin beside her shop in Manila's famous Divisoria Market. After ten years of establishing relationships and creating affinities with various people, she was able to purchase land, build the temple, and invite monks from China to come and take charge. The temple has a board of directors and in 2012, moved the chapel in Tutuban to Antonio Rivera Street nearby.

Main Buildings

The Palawan temple is very near the Honda Bay's dock from which tourists depart to visit other islands. It is modeled after the temple of the same name in Mount Putuo; the main entrance opens to a colorful garden. The Guanyin shrine is at the center of the property. On the right side is a two-storey structure for offices, dormitories, dining hall, and kitchen. The left side has a shed for storage. At the back is a smaller chapel also dedicated to Guanyin.

Following the temple layout in Mount Putuo, plans are underway for two more buildings, the Hall of the Heavenly Kings (Tianwang Dian) in front, and the Great Buddha Hall (Daxiong Baodian) at the back.

Leadership and Primary Activities

The monk Guangda arrived in the Philippines in 2010 and divides his time between Manila and Palawan. One monk assists him, and one nun stays more permanently at the Palawan temple. Chanting is still being organized on an ad hoc basis, but many believers come to carry out their private devotions.

C. VISAYAS

1. Buddha Light Temple (Foguang Si)

Contact Information

Benedicto Street, North Reclamation Area, Cebu City

Tel. 032 2331884; 2335416

History

The temple was founded by Shanqi , who came to the Philippines with Ruijin in 1946, upon the invitation of Xingyuan. He served at Seng Guan and Hwa Chong Temples, often as one of the three assistants to the abbot. In 1962, he was invited by contacts in Cebu to start a new temple there.

He began with a small center called the Xiangguang Lianshe , until he was able to purchase property and build what became the Buddha Light Temple, inaugurated in 1968. Shanqi died in 1974, and subsequently some monks came to stay for short periods. Ultimately, the temple fell to disrepair.

In 1997, Zhengzhe, a disciple of Shanqi's Dharma brother back in Fujian, took responsibility for the temple and sent his own disciples to staff the temple (see entry on Chong Hoc Temple for more details). That same year, one of Zhengzhe's lay disciples from Hong Kong visited the temple and made a vow that if he ever became a monk, he would return to Cebu and improve the condition of the temple.

That disciple later became a monk under Zhengzhe, and also began practicing esoteric Buddhism, where he was recognized as a Living Buddha. He is known as Bannuo Rinpoche (Bannuo Renboqie), and has attracted many young disciples. He did not forget his vow, and in 2010 he began the major refurbishment of the Buddha Light Temple in Cebu. He has introduced the iconography of esoteric Buddhism to the temple, but has retained the older statues of Chinese Buddhism as respect to the temple's origins.

Main Buildings

The temple's second floor main shrine to the three Buddhas used to face the road on 6th Avenue, but Bannuo Rinpoche changed this orientation and relocated the Buddha images to the other end of the hall, facing the temple's back door on Benedicto Street. This way, the three Buddha images are facing the sea, which is also the eastern direction.

A small garden fronts the temple, and by the gate a small shrine to the territorial god Tudigong has been erected.

The worship hall on the ground floor has also been completed. It is air-conditioned, and several statues have been added to the original three of the bodhisattvas Guanyin, Mañjusrī, and Samantabhadra. The new additions are the seven Buddhas of the Eastern Universe presided over by the Medicine Buddha. These have been placed in front of the bodhisattva statues. The eighteen luohan of Chinese Buddhism can be found on the side walls. By the main entrance are paintings of the esoteric depictions of Maitreya and Mañjusrī.

The ancestral chapels on the ground floor have also been renovated, and more modern, plastic spirit tablets are already in use. Niches for interring ashes are also in place.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Bannuo has more than ten young monks assisting him. While some iconography from esoteric Buddhism has been introduced, he says the practice of the temple will continue to follow Chinese Buddhism. There are assemblies every weekend and all the Buddhist feast days are observed with chanting.

Bannuo is keen to engage in charitable activities, and has already organized the distribution of goods to the poor in the neighborhood.

2. Chu Un Temple (Ci'en Si)

Contact Information

246 V. Rama Avenue, Cebu City

Tel. 032 2538144

Website http://www.bliacebu.com/

History

This temple was built in 1988 by Paterno Luym (Lü Xizong) to honor his late mother, Chen Ruzhi , who was a devout Buddhist. After building the temple on their own property, Paterno and his wife Rosita (Lin Zhuzhu) looked for monastics to manage temple affairs. Their search brought them to Taiwan, and discussion with Foguangshan resulted in two nuns, Cirong and Yongguang , being sent to Cebu in 1989. Cirong was abbess for one year; Yongguang became the second abbess in 1990. The temple's formal inauguration was held that year.

In 1992, Yongguang was invited to start a Foguangshan temple in Manila (see entry of Mabuhay Temple), and this temple was left in the care of Yongning . This was the beginning of the Foguangshan network of temples in the Philippines under the leadership of one abbess.

Chu Un Temple's second building, named the K itigarbha Hall (Dizang Dian), was constructed in 1996. This served as the temple's ancestral hall and included a columbary.

Initially, the Luym family signed short-term contracts with Foguangshan for temple management. After seeing the success of the first few years, however, the contract was extended until the family decided to donate the entire temple to Foguangshan.

An important milestone in the temple's life was the 2007 production of

Siddhartha, a stage musical that was performed to thousands of viewers in the Philippines and Taiwan. Its success led to the establishment of the Foguangshan Academy for the Performing Arts at the Cebu temple premises, with the vision of propagating Buddhism through the arts.

Main Buildings

The large property on a small hill has spacious grounds. From the main entrance on a busy avenue, a winding road leads to open gardens. The Great Compassion Hall (Dabei Dian) where Guanyin is enshrined is at the center of the property. Behind it is a small building for offices, refectory, and living quarters. The K itigarbha Hall is to the left.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Youlin is in charge of this temple, but the abbess of Mabuhay Temple in Manila, Miaojing , comes at least once a month to meet the community and give a talk.

Chanting follows the liturgy books of Foguangshan, and the usual feast days are observed. Cultural activities are given strong emphasis, with activities organized by the local chapter of the Buddha’s Light International Association (BLIA) during Chinese festivals like the New Year and Mid-autumn. Charitable projects are also undertaken, as well as annual summer camps for children. The Academy for the Performing Arts may be a key instrument in the growth of Foguangshan in Cebu.

3. Fa Tzang Temple (Fazang Si)

Contact Information

C.L. Montelibano, Narra Extension, Bacolod City

Tel. 034 4344590

History

This temple has its origins in a popular devotion to Guandi , venerated as Guansheng Dizun . It is not clear when the first shrine called Tongzhun Miao in this city was built, but in 1968 it was no longer adequate and a new property, selected with the help of Ruijin, was purchased.

Zeng Huanma was spearheading the project, and it was he who got Ruijin involved. The latter suggested to Zeng and his wife Hong Shuxiong that the new temple have two floors, the ground floor for the Tongzhun Miao, and the second floor for the Great Buddha Hall. This idea was accepted by the community, and the Negros Occidental Buddhist Association was formed in 1969.

Construction was completed in 1972, and Ruijin presided over the inauguration ceremony. The temple's formal name combined its original name with a new designation as a Buddhist temple, thus becoming known as the Tongzhun Miao, Fa Tzang Temple.

The Buddhist Society's board of directors invited Ruijin to be the first abbot, and he accepted, although it was an honorary title because of his base in Manila. Ruijin invited the caigu Zhenyuan (see entry on Bunsu Temple) to reside at the temple from 1975 to 1982. From 1982, the Zeng couple took charge of the temple. By this time, Hong had taken refuge under Ruijin and took the bodhisattva vows, the first in Bacolod to do so. For several years, the couple invited Weici to come from Cebu once a month for some days of devotions and lectures.

In 1985, the board of directors began discussions with Foguangshan in Taiwan for them to lead Buddhist propagation in the temple. A succession of two monastics came for short periods of time, but ultimately there was no appropriate match between the temple's management and Foguangshan.

Hong persevered in the search for monastics to come to Bacolod, and worked through the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo Foxuehui) in Taiwan. In 1988 she was directed to the Zhuxi Temple in Tainan , where she met Yicheng . The latter accepted the invitation to go to Bacolod, and arrived there the following year with her companions Yiwen and Xinjie . They have been at the temple ever since.

Main Buildings

From the temple entrance, grand concrete steps lead up to the temple. The ground floor preserves the shrine to Guandi and devotees are free to pray there. The second floor is the Great Buddha Hall where the central image is of Sākyamuni Buddha, flanked by the bodhisattvas K itigarbha and Guanyin. The statues are all made of Italian white marble, and the Guanyin image is modeled on local images of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a way of attracting local people to Guanyin.

In 2000, a property adjacent to the temple was purchased, and Yicheng created the Lumbini Park, planting fruits and vegetables there. She also constructed a modest two-storey building, the ground floor serving as an ancestral hall (Bao'en Tang), and the second floor, a multipurpose memorial hall dedicated to her master, Tianyi .

Leadership and Primary Activities

Yicheng has been the abbess since 1989. She and her community have earned an edifying reputation in the city, with their frequent charitable activities, ascetic lifestyle, and reliance on fruits and vegetables from their own garden for their sustenance.

Regular chanting is held for the Lunar New Year, the feast days of Guandi (first,

fifth, and sixth lunar months), and Guanyin, the Buddha’s birthday, and the seventh month prayers for the dead. On the first and fifteenth of each month, up to one hundred devotees enjoy the free vegetarian lunch at the temple, even if they have not attended the preceding chanting assembly.

A cultural evening is held on the fifteenth day of the first month to mark the end of the New Year celebrations, and a summer camp for children is held annually. The nuns are also very welcoming to student groups that come and visit, providing them with souvenirs and vegetarian snacks.

The nuns visit Taiwan regularly, and invite specialists from there to visit Bacolod and offer classes on Chinese culture, martial arts, etc.

4. Iloilo Foguang Yuan (Yilang Foguang Yuan)

Contact Information

13-A Fuentes Street, Iloilo City

Tel. 033 3372002

History

While there are privately-run folk Chinese temples in Iloilo, this is the only properly Buddhist chapel or hall in the city. In 1990, Foguangshan's Yongguang was based at the Chu Un Temple in Cebu and was invited to give talks in neighboring Iloilo City. As the devotees came to understand the Foguangshan brand of Buddhism, they began attending chanting and other assemblies at their temples in Cebu and Bacolod. In 1995, when the Buddha's Light International Association was being organized in the Philippines, a chapter was formed in Iloilo. The key members of this group collaborated to find a suitable place for their group's activities, and in 1999, the third floor of an apartment building was selected as the Foguangshan place in Iloilo.

Main Buildings

The Buddha Hall enshrines a white marble statue of the Buddha, with side altars to Guanyin and K itigarbha. Other facilities include a small office, refectory, and living quarters.

Leadership and Primary Activities

One monastic used to manage the affairs of the temples in Cebu, Bacolod, and Iloilo, but now there is a monastic assigned to each place. Ruhao is in charge in

Iloilo. The local BLIA chapter actively organizes various activities such as Vesak Day at a local shopping mall, children’s camps, a Buddhist choir, and visits to charitable institutions. A lecture featuring speakers from outside Iloilo is held once every quarter.

Chanting is held every first and fifteenth of the month, the New Year, and the feast days of Guanyin, K itigarbha, and the Medicine Buddha.

5. Lam Hua Temple (Nanhua Si)

Contact Information

Sabang District, Tacloban City

Tel. 053 5238259; 3211123

History

Prior to 1976, a layman maintained a private shrine in the city dedicated to Guandi and Guanyin and called it Yixin Temple. In 1976, Huiyong , who was at the Manila Buddha Temple, came to Tacloban upon the invitation of his godsister, who had married a man from Tacloban. Huiyong first stayed at Yixin Temple, but due to security issues, started renting his own apartment in 1977. He called his chapel the Lam Hua Temple and welcomed devotees to use it. In 1980, he bought the present temple property for Php 36,000. The property was nestled on a hill and faced the sea.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new temple were held in 1982, with Ruijin invited to preside. Ruijin contributed some money for the new temple, and Huiyong organized a Thousand Names of the Buddha chanting assembly at the Manila Buddha Temple to raise funds for the Tacloban temple. A women's association was also organized to help with the fundraising. The work on the three-storey building was completed in 1984.

Around this time, Huiyong adopted a local boy named Laurence Ko and raised him at his temple. The boy later became a monk named Daxiu and, being studious, was sent to Taiwan for formal Buddhist studies. He chose to remain there.

Huiyong died in 1994, and in the succeeding years, various monastics came to stay for short periods of time. Most of them were invited by the board of directors from temples in Manila, but one, the nun Chuanyun , came from the Nanputuo Temple in Xiamen. Some devotees from Tacloban had met her there

and invited her to come. She stayed for about a year in 2002. The present abbot, Yinxiong , was invited to come from the White Horse Temple in Luoyang in 2008. After Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) hit Tacloban in 2013, he moved to the Chong Hoc Temple in Pasay, Metro Manila.

Main Buildings

Built on a hill, the temple's lower floors are very narrow. The ground floor has a shrine to Guandi, and the wall has strips of paper corresponding to his divination sticks. The ancestral hall is on the second floor, with numerous spirit tablets of local people. The third floor is the Great Buddha Hall with statues of the three Buddhas, and side altars to the two protector bodhisattvas, Qielan (Buddhist name of Guandi) and Weituo .

The worship area on the third floor doubles as the refectory when meals are served at the temple. The abbot's living quarters are also on the third floor.

The devotees believe that they must build another hall on the fourth floor to serve as the temple's "head." They have been advised that without a "head" on top of the temple building, the temple would also have no monastic to serve as a more permanent abbot.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Yinxiong led short chanting assemblies on the first and fifteenth of the month, the Guanyin feast days, and the birthday of the Buddha. During the seventh month, after the Manila temples have had their assemblies, two monastics are invited to come from Manila for two days of chanting for the dead.

On the thirteenth of the first and fifth months, a chanting assembly for Guandi under his Buddhist name as the bodhisattva Qielan, is organized.

6. Phu Shian Temple (Puxian Si, formerly Dinghui Si)

Contact Information

25 Beverly Hills, Lahug, Cebu City

Tel. 032 2546838

History

This temple is closely linked with the earlier Dinghui Temple, built on Mango Avenue in 1951 by a group of lay Buddhists, including the family of Chen Ruzhi (see entry on Chu Un Temple). They invited a certain Miaomen to be the abbot, and this monk stayed until 1961.

By 1961, Weici was already in Cebu teaching at the Samantabhadra Institute and residing at a “Forest of Laymen” (Jushi Lin, Buddhist term for a lay association’s facilities) set up for him by the school. He had arrived from Taiwan in 1958, along with Zili of the Manila Samantabhadra Institute (see entry on Un Siu Temple). He was a native of Gaoyou , Jiangsu, and was educated at various Buddhist institutes in China and Taiwan, recognizing Yanpei , Cihang, and Yinshun as his teachers. Upon the departure of Miaomen, he was invited to take charge of the Dinghui Temple, and he accepted this request.

In 1977, the temple was prone to frequent flooding and was inadequate in other ways, so Weici convinced the Buddhist community leaders to move the temple to higher ground. The property in Beverly Hills was purchased and a new temple was built. It was inaugurated in 1980, with Yanpei invited from Singapore to preside at the ceremonies. Delegates from most of the temples in Manila came for the chanting and lectures that lasted seven days. The new temple took on the same name as the school where Weici had been teaching since 1958.

For a few years starting in 1999, the temple published a monthly magazine. This was one of Weici’s many publishing efforts. His writings have been compiled and published by the temple (see Sources Cited and References).

Also in 1999, a foundation, now known as the Dharma Master Wei Chi Foundation, was established by Weici's former students to award university scholarships to graduates of Samantabhadra Institute, and to organize cultural and charitable activities.

Main Buildings

The temple lies on spacious grounds just before the entrance to the Beverly Hills Subdivision, where a Daoist temple can also be found. The temple has two main buildings and a big garden. The central building houses the worship halls and the side building is the ancestral hall and columbary. At the central building, the ground floor is dedicated to the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin, and the second floor to the three Buddhas. The dining hall is an annex to the ground floor.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Weici, now in his 90s, is still the abbot, but other monks and nuns have been assisting him at the temple for many years. The Assistant Abbot is named Zhengyuan and is related by blood to Weici. He arrived in 1993 and has been managing temple affairs, especially since Weici has spent long periods of time in solitary retreat (i.e., from 2004 to 2007) at a special room prepared for him on the third floor of the temple.

There is a weekly Sunday morning assembly, and a major assembly at the start of the Lunar New Year. Other feast days are observed with simpler rites and private devotions. Being the oldest temple in Cebu, many Chinese families have ties with the temple and often request the monks to perform funerary rites.

On Sunday afternoons, the Dharma Master Wei Chi Foundation's scholars gather at the temple for Buddhist education classes.

7. Yuan Thong Temple (Yuangtong Si)

Contact Information

2876 Burgos Street, Bacolod City

Tel. 034 4324991; 4336992

History

Beginning in 1985, devotees in Bacolod have been exposed to the Humanistic Buddhism taught by Foguangshan. At that time, Foguangshan monastics were teaching at the city's Fa Tzang Temple (see separate entry), but did not decide to stay there long-term. In 1989, devotees led by Chen Suzhen , knowing that Foguangshan had begun managing the Chu Un Temple in Cebu, went to Cebu and renewed the invitation for Foguangshan to have a presence in Bacolod. Yongguang responded that it would be more convenient if they could have their own place in Bacolod.

Chen returned to Bacolod and quickly mobilized her network to purchase property, including a wooden house, on Burgos Street. In 1991, she led a delegation to Taiwan. In an audience with Xingyun, she offered total control of the temple to Foguangshan. That same year, the turnover ceremonies were held, and Xingyun gave the temple its name in honor of Guanyin.

In 2000, the community made plans to replace the old wooden structure with a sturdier and more modern temple. Yongguang led the groundbreaking ceremonies, and other monastics came from Taiwan to assist in the design and supervise the construction. The temple was completed and inaugurated in 2004. With the building completed, the monastic stationed in Bacolod, Yongke , began organizing various activities to deepen the roots of Buddhism among Filipinos. The temple has since become the venue for Buddhist camps that are not limited to the summer season.

Main Buildings

The temple entrance has a small garden surrounded by a circular, uphill road that leads to the main Guanyin shrine on the second floor. There is also a meditation hall, dormitories, and other smaller rooms on the second floor. The ground floor has the offices, the library, dining hall, and ancestral hall with ossuary at the back.

Leadership and Primary Activities

As of 2015, Zhiyi is in charge of this temple. The local chapter of the BLIA assists her in all the activities.

Chanting is organized for the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, the New Year, and the Buddhist feast days especially those of Guanyin, Sākyamuni Buddha, the Medicine Buddha, and K itigarbha. There are also special assemblies to pray for the deceased.

The temple is kept busy with activities that cater to different age groups. There is a study group and choir that meet regularly, plus classes in dance and Taiji. The New Year and mid-Autumn festivals, and the Buddha’s birthday, are marked with public events that highlight Buddhism and Chinese culture.

The Humanistic Academy of Life and Arts is a relatively new program that builds on the success of three-month camps for young adults who are on gap years or are in between jobs and want to spend some time in spiritual practice. The camp is held at the temple premises and has attracted some foreigners.

D. MINDANAO

1. Hoc Chuan Temple (Fuquan Si)

Contact Information

J.R. Estrada Street, Tetuan, Zamboanga City

Tel. 062 9910411

History

In 1881 (or 1886), a man named Chen Jun brought a statue of Guanyin from the Longshan Temple in Anhai , Quanzhou, and set up a private shrine in the Tetuan district of Zamboanga City. A more suitable place was rented in 1900 and a small temple was built and named Hoc Chuan Temple. The first character, “Fu” in Mandarin, recalls Fujian, and the second character, “Quan” in Mandarin, recalls Quanzhou, where the statue of Guanyin came from. The name also evokes the idea of the temple as a wellspring of happiness and wisdom (fuhui zhi quanyuan).

In 1937, Yang Shichang wanted a permanent home for the temple, and formed an association to work toward this purpose. He headed the association and raised the funds to buy the property in Tetuan where the first shrine was located. Plans were interrupted by the Second World War II, and construction began only in 1947. Building work was completed in 1950.

Although the temple was famously visited by Yinshun in 1955, it could only be a proper temple with the presence of monastics. The board of directors wanted this to become a reality. In 1958, they succeeded in inviting Chuanguan and two companions, Chuanhai and Daolü , to come and run the temple. Chuanguan was the abbot. He was born to a Buddhist family in Hui’an, Fujian. Ordained and trained at temples in Jinjiang, Quanzhou, and Qingdao, his training included a period under the renowned monk Hongyi . His spiritual practice also involved a three-year solitary retreat.

The invitation from Zamboanga came in 1956, but the processing of travel

papers necessitated a two-year stay in Hong Kong until, with the help of Ruimiao, the three monks were able to travel to Zamboanga in 1958.

Chuanguan founded the Avalokitesvara School (Guanyin Zhongxue) beside the temple in 1968, and in 1991 spearheaded the total renovation of the temple, the buildings of which were in urgent need of repair. Chuanguan died in 1993 at age 89.

The board of directors once again searched for a new abbot. They found him in Chuanchan , also from Fujian, who had arrived in Manila in 1993 upon the invitation of Guangchun to assist at the Thousand Buddha Temple in Quezon City. Chuanchan arrived in Zamboanga in 1995 and on the Guanyin feast on the ninth lunar month, Weici presided over his installation as abbot, the launching of the temple's charity clinic, and the school's twenty-eighth anniversary.

During his time as abbot, Chuanchan made numerous improvements to the school and upgraded some of the temple's facilities.

Main Buildings

The temple entrance leads to a sizeable plaza with a pond in the center. The temple building has a large, air-conditioned central hall where the altar enshrines Guanyin as well as the three Buddhas. Behind it is the ancestral hall, and a special pavilion honoring Chuanguan. The office, refectory, and monastics' living quarters are in side buildings, thus somewhat forming the Chinese character tong (Cf. Shi Miaoqin 1998: 394).

Leadership and Primary Activities

Chuanchan is assisted by another monk and two nuns. Teachers from China who teach at the school also reside in the temple.

The temple has two major assemblies each year—the Lunar New Year to pray for blessings, and the three-day chanting during the seventh month. Regular devotion days are observed on the first and fifteenth of the month. On Friday mornings, groups of students from the school are brought to the temple for short

prayers. In the past, there was a regular Sunday assembly but this has been discontinued due to the declining numbers of attendees.

The women’s association has about eighty members and assists the temple in organizing activities, including a charity clinic held twice a month. To celebrate the lunar New Year, there is always a major program during which the school and temple communities come together.

2. Long Hua Temple (Longhua Si)

Contact Information

Cobaguio Avenue, Davao City

Tel. 082 2217992

History

The temple was founded by Guangfan in 1966, although the building was completed and inaugurated only in 1968. Guangfan, a native of Quanzhou, was a disciple of Ruijin and was ordained at Mount Putuo in 1947 at age 21. He underwent his Buddhist education in Hangzhou and Hong Kong, and arrived in Manila in 1958 to help Ruijin at Seng Guan Temple.

During a visit in Davao in 1965, the enthusiasm of local lay Buddhists convinced him to start a temple there. The temple was named Longhua, recalling the story of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, attaining buddhahood under the Longhua tree.

In 1978, Guangfan founded the Davao branch of the Philippine Academy of Sakya, with the Chinese name Longhua School (Longhua Xuexiao, see separate entry on the school in Chapter 5), but the school began operations only in 1994.

On a visit to Seng Guan Temple in 2001, Guangfan met Nengzhen , then aged 36, who was visiting with a group of monastics from the Guanghua Temple in Putian , Fujian. Nengzhen was a native of Putian and had been educated and ordained there. Guangfan invited Nengzhen to visit Davao, and eventually asked him to come and take over as abbot. Nengzhen accepted and assumed the abbotship in 2002. In 2005, he founded the temple's charity clinic.

Guangfan had also founded the Leifeng Vihara in California in 1988, and died there in 2004. His ashes were brought to Davao and interred at the temple.

Main Buildings

The temple's main entrance leads to a circular driveway, with a pond adorned in the center by a concrete statue of Maitreya. The steps lead up to the Bodhi Hall on the second-floor, where Sākyamuni Buddha is enshrined with his two attendants. The statues are of white Italian marble and the use of wood panels for walls is unique to this temple.

The Great Compassion Hall of Guanyin is behind the main hall, and the small ancestral hall is on the ground floor. The worship halls form a vertical line, and the living quarters, office, and refectory are aligned horizontally, giving the cluster of buildings a T-shape.

The school is located behind the temple but has its own access road.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Nengzhen is assisted by another monk and two nuns. There is a weekly Sunday morning assembly, and chanting is held on the first and fifteenth of the month, and all the Buddhist feast days. Every few years, a grand chanting assembly is organized with the help of monastics from outside Davao. An example of a grand chanting assembly is the one that uses the Emperor Liang Repentance Ceremony (Lianghuang Baochan).

The charity clinic holds medical missions in different areas three times a year. A scholarship fund was also established in memory of Guangfan in 2006.

3. Po Lian Temple (Baolian Si)

Contact Information

E. Quirino Avenue, Davao City

Tel. 082 2275370

History

This temple began as a private family shrine. Lin Ping , born in Fujian in 1889 and raised with bound feet, followed her husband to the Philippines in 1920. Her husband, surnamed Tan (Chen), died in 1928, and she was left to care for six children—two of her own, and four from her husband's Filipino wife, who also died young. She survived and managed to raise the children. At some point, she set up an altar in her home and people came to pray with her or seek her counsel.

Lin Ping was illiterate, but she learned to read Chinese as an adult so that she could chant sutras, and read and interpret the oracles. The only thing she knew how to write was her name. In 1959, devotees pooled their resources and built the temple for her. Ruijin came to Davao for the blessing ceremonies.

In 1960, Lin Ping invited Miaojue from the Hwa Chong Temple in Malabon to come and serve as the abbot. Miaojue came but stayed for only three months, as his services were urgently needed in Malabon. He had been born in Indonesia in 1918, but returned to China with his family in 1934. He was ordained by Xingyuan in Quanzhou in 1935. After some Buddhist studies, including a time with Hongyi studying the Vinaya during the World War II, he was at the Nanputuo Temple in Xiamen when Xingyuan asked him to go to Manila in 1950. Delays in the processing of his papers led to a seven-year stay in Hong Kong, and he arrived in Manila only in 1957. He was sent to the Hwa Chong Temple, where he supervised the construction of many buildings, thus accounting for the short-lived stay in Davao.

After Miaojue's short time as abbot, Lin Ping managed the temple until her death

in 1990, at age 102.

Her daughter-in-law Hong Binhua , then based in Manila, moved back to Davao to look after the temple. Hong Binhua died in October 2012. The future of the temple is now in the hands of her family.

Main Buildings

The modest temple has one main hall, and an ancestral hall to Lin Ping on the left (the inscriptions use her Dharma name, Zongshang). The main hall has a statue of the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin by the entrance, and Sākyamuni Buddha enshrined in the center. There are side altars to K itigarbha and a folk deity, Furen Ma (two small statues), believed to be the special patroness of those who desire to have sons.

A house stands beside the temple, where the caretaker and her family live.

Leadership and Primary Activities

During Lin Ping’s time, regular chanting was held on the devotion and feast days, capped with a vegetarian lunch. At present, the temple is open to the public but is used only for private devotions.

4. Sam Poh Temple (Sanbao Si)

Contact Information

Canelar Street, Caburihan, Zamboanga City

Tel. 062 9911367

History

A Daoist shrine known as the Shenjiao Miao has existed on the temple's site prior to the 1950s (exact year unknown). A 1953 text already mentions Sam Po Temple (Shi Miaoqin 1998, 380), saying also that it did not have a resident monk.

Chuanhai arrived in Zamboanga in 1958 together with Chuanguan to staff the Hoc Chuan Temple. In 1960, Sam Po's board of directors asked him to take charge of the Sam Po Temple, and he accepted. In 1983, the temple buildings were renovated and the Daoist Hall was renamed the Bao An Gong .

Chuanhai left the temple in 1990 and moved to the Seng Guan Temple in Manila. From then until 1997, no monastic resided at the temple and the board of directors just maintained the place. In 1997, the board invited Jiejin from the Thousand Buddha Temple in Quezon City to become the abbot.

Jiejin was born in a Hokkien-speaking village in Wenzhou in 1958. He left the lay life at the age of 31 and was ordained at 34. In 1994, at age 37, he accepted the invitation to assist at the Thousand Buddha Temple in the Philippines, and it was from there that he was invited to go to Zamboanga. As abbot, he improved the temple environment by sprucing up the garden, creating a pond, and personally sculpting large outdoor statues of Guanyin and Maitreya.

Main Buildings

The temple complex is not easy to find. The entrance is in a cul de sac not visible from the main road, and the gate opens to the side of the garden. The three temple buildings are immediately to the right of the gate.

The three buildings are neatly arrayed and are of similar sizes. The first one is the ancestral hall, refectory, and living quarters. The second one, at the center, is the Buddha Hall where the three Buddhas are enshrined. The third building is the Daoist Hall. The three buildings face the garden.

Leadership and Primary Activities

Jiejin lived alone in the temple and managed all affairs by himself, including housekeeping. He had led the chanting by himself, and trained some lay devotees to use the musical instruments. Food was brought to the temple for the feast days.

The main devotion days observed are the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, the feast days of Guanyin, the birthday of the Buddha, and the seventh-month chanting of the K itigarbha’s vows.

The temple attracted some new immigrants from China, many of whom spent Sunday afternoons chatting with Jiejin at the temple. As of 2015, however, Jiejin has relinquished responsibility over the temple and the board of directors is still searching for a new monastic to take charge of the temple.

Analysis of selected temple communities

In this section I further discuss five temples that, in my view, represent the situation of Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines today. I selected them as examples of the range of activities found across all the temples in the country, from ritual devotions to lectures on Buddhist topics. Four of the temples are located in different parts of Metro Manila, signifying the movement from Chinatown in Binondo to the suburbs of the metropolis. The fifth case represents the more recent trends emerging from Taiwan.

Seng Guan Temple

Aside from being the oldest temple community in the Philippines, the Seng Guan Temple stands out for the sheer scale of its activities. On any given Sunday, hundreds of people arrive at the temple for a range of sessions, each person focusing on his or her particular form of practice without minding other people too much. The regular congregation assembles for their chanting in the morning, while children of all ages proceed to their Sunday school classes. Meanwhile, from early in the morning until noontime, a steady stream of devotees arrives at the Guanyin shrine on the ground floor to carry out their devotions. After the usual offering of incense and oil, those with special concerns will use the divination instruments. If they need assistance in interpreting texts, they may consult a volunteer who is at a desk to one side of the hall. For many, the temple visit includes prayers and offerings at the ancestral hall as well, where the spirit tablets of their loved ones are kept. At another corner of the main hall, a volunteer physician is available for general consultations.

There are different levels of spiritual practice evident in the people who visit the temple on Sundays, but even those who practice popular Buddhism at the temple are very regular with their Sunday observance. Yet another level of practice can be discerned in the larger number of people who only come on special occasions, notably the Lunar New Year and the Yulanpen Festival. For the latter, special office counters are opened for up to four weeks prior to the feast so that people can come and register the names of their dead for inclusion in the intentions of the three-day chanting.

Lay groups at the temple are crucial in carrying out all these activities. Just as lay believers took the initiative to build the temple, it is also the lay groups that sustain the activities. One of my informants, AL,[49] told me that since so many people visit the temple, the laity need to be active because the monastics are “too busy.” For the New Year’s Eve devotions for example, devotees compete with each other to be the first to light the incense, and this has resulted in scuffles in the past. The lay volunteers, therefore, step in and organize the queues in order to preserve the spiritual atmosphere in the temple.

Lay volunteers also take care of accommodating the groups of students that visit the temple and want to learn about Buddhism. Lay people, rather than the monastics, give visitors a guided tour and a short talk. I found it very striking that it is the lay people who are at the forefront of propagating Buddhism, rather than the monastics. The latter seem to limit themselves to the organization of chanting and rituals for the dead. Only one or two of them try to be present at all the other activities that take place in the temple.

Around 2004, the abbot, Chuanyin, tried to modernize the temple by inviting monastics from Fagushan or Dharma Drum Mountain[50] to come and manage the temple. Chuanyin thought of Fagushan because it was the only one of the four major Taiwanese Buddhist orders that was not yet present in the Philippines. (The others were Foguangshan, Zhongtaishan, and Ciji.) He told me that it would add more color to the local Buddhist scene if all four were present in the country.[51] Master Shengyan, founder of Fagushan, had no monks available and sent four nuns instead.

Unfortunately, there was opposition from key quarters to the involvement of the nuns.[52] In the end, loopholes in the nuns' immigration papers resulted in their return to Taiwan.

The opposition to the nuns was not necessarily a move against reform of the temple. It was more of a reaction to the lack of consultation in decision making, such that the shock of seeing the temple turned over to Taiwanese nuns was too much and too soon for some members of the board of directors. Thus, the move to modernize the practices at the temple has to wait for a more opportune time.

This recent development in the life of Seng Guan Temple illustrates not only the difficulty of initiating reform, but also the tension between the monastic community and the lay board of directors. One would think that the abbot has the power to decide what to do in his temple, but where temples are founded and built by lay groups, the abbot does not have complete authority.

Due to the legal procedures involved in purchasing land and constructing buildings, temples in the Philippines are legally owned by lay associations or foundations. This is done for practical purposes on the assumption that religious matters will be entrusted to the monastics. The arrangement works for the most part, but in this recent case of Seng Guan Temple, it became clear that the lay board of directors still had the ultimate authority.

There were monastics in other temples who told me that the tension between the lay board and the monastics can be a very real one. In some cases, the monastic is made to feel that he or she is employed by the board and must defer to the board for major decisions.[53] In one case, that of Sam Po Temple in Zamboanga, the monk told me that he accepted to take charge of the temple only on the condition that he would have complete authority.

In general, there is a smooth working relationship between monastics and the lay boards of temples, but as the experience of Seng Guan Temple shows, the relationship can be challenging as well.

Thousand Buddha Temple

The temple's location in a predominantly Chinese part of Quezon City and its decision to have a columbary to serve the Chinese community make it an attractive option for many Chinese Filipinos. It is located near several funeral homes and when a family decides to purchase a niche at the temple columbary, a long-term relationship with the temple begins. The families of the deceased visit the grave of their loved ones regularly, and participate in chanting at the temple, especially for the dead. The economic wheels of the temple are therefore kept turning.

It would not be fair, however, to characterize this temple as one that caters only to the funerary needs of Chinese families. The number of people who come for chanting on the Buddhist feast days is smaller than that of Seng Guan Temple, but there is a stable core of believers, especially in the meditation class on Sunday mornings. Lectures and other spiritual activities are organized regularly, providing an environment where Chinese Buddhists can nourish their spirituality.

The charity clinic has been in operation for many years and has been of great service to the low-income communities that surround the temple.

Together with the Philippine Buddhacare Academy that was attached to it[54] until the school closed in 2015, the temple complex is a Buddhist enclave in that part of the metropolis. Unlike other temples that were built and organized by lay people, Guangchun's spiritual descendants are firmly in charge of the temple. He has disciples in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Philippines, thus ensuring a monastic network that continues to have active links to the temple. For example, Chuanmiao , whose master's thesis documenting Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines has been of much help to this book, is Taiwanese but "left home" under Guangchun on a visit to Manila soon after the death of his father.[55] He eventually returned to Taiwan for formal Buddhist education and has remained there to work at a Buddhist institute. He returns to Manila every seventh lunar month to help lead the repentance ceremonies during the Yulanpen Festival. During fieldwork, I also met other Taiwanese monks who were based at this temple.

The monastic and lay networks that converge at this temple suggest that it will continue to thrive.

Un Siu Temple

The temple is not remarkable for the size of its buildings or its congregation, but for the approach it has taken on Buddhist practice. The lectures and publications that originate from this temple are the legacy of Zili, whose emphasis on Buddhist learning bore fruit in a generation of students who have a more than cursory understanding of Buddhism. They serve as the core community of this temple, now under the inspiration of Fajing. The community demonstrates the extent of Buddhist propagation that is possible when Buddhist education (as at the Samantabhadra Institute) is supplemented by temple practice.

Such circumstances were unique to the monastic career of Zili, and cannot be easily replicated in the Philippines. The same pattern was true in Cebu, where Weici taught at the Samantabhadra Institute there and became abbot of the Phu Shian Temple, but it remains to be seen if the pattern will be manifested again among the declining number of students at the Buddhist schools. In Cebu, there is no monastic teaching in the school, while in Manila, the classes are taught by the same nun who also teaches at another Buddhist school. Clearly, the human resources are quite stretched.

Holy Buddhist Temple

Though the services at this temple follow the same pattern as that of Un Siu Temple, i.e., a lecture follows the chanting, the educational component does not seem as strong. At this temple, the lecture is held in the shrine hall, whereas Un Siu Temple has a separate lecture hall where the devotees gather after the chanting session. It may seem like a small logistical difference, but it makes a big difference in the impact of the talk.

The temple's location in Cubao rather than at the heart of a predominantly Chinese community makes it less visible, but the temple has its core of devotees to the old image of Guanyin. Furthermore, its charity clinic has also been a source of comfort for the poor people who are served by it.

Probably the temple's greatest asset, however, is the personality of the abbess, Hengji. Using the temple as her base, she has been involved in numerous Buddhist concerns, from the mundane task of facilitating the visa applications of monastics in other temples to initiating disaster relief drives. One informant told me that Hengji has never been known to solicit funds aggressively, but people volunteer to give her money because they see how hard she works in her various projects. Her hospitality toward any visitor to the temple, including myself, is also quite impressive. The fact that she is a locally born Chinese and speaks the local language also helps to establish a deeper affinity with the local people.

Foguangshan Mabuhay Temple

For the first sixty years of institutional Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, from the 1930s to the 1990s, the practice of Buddhism basically followed the South Fujianese forms that the monastics established in the Philippines. In these traditional temples, monks or caigu were in charge, and the number of nuns did not become significant until the 1970s. There were monastic links to Taiwan, but only in relation to securing formal Buddhist education.

The ritual life of the temples was the predominant activity, while some places eventually developed cultural, educational, and charitable programs. For linguistic reasons, Buddhist activities stayed within the ethnic Chinese community.

In the 1990s, a new Buddhist spring unfolded in the Philippines with the arrival of the Taiwanese Buddhist groups. Ciji, though they did not construct temples, quickly earned a reputation for being at the forefront of Chinese charitable work. The trademark blue and white outfit of their volunteers, and the Chinese Buddhist roots of the movement, attracted the participation of many ethnic Chinese, regardless of their formal religious affiliation.

It was Foguangshan, however, that brought new impetus to the practice of Chinese Buddhism. While their base was still their four temples in the Chinese communities of Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, and Manila, they directed their activities toward a larger audience. They observed the same feasts and chanted the same sutras, but they brought a new and elegant sensibility to spiritual practice. Their altars, for example, have a singular focus, unlike traditional temples that crowd images of many deities into one shrine. They do not have divination services at their temples, and they introduced simpler ways of praying for the dead that do not involve the elaborate customs of popular religion. In short, they were not afraid of doing things differently, and they took the time to explain their way of doing things.

Many Chinese Buddhists are attracted to the Foguangshan way, and they attend Foguangshan activities simultaneous with their involvement in the traditional temples.[56] Slowly, Foguangshan is weaning Chinese Buddhists away from the mix of Buddhist and folk practices at traditional temples.

The syncretism with Christianity is also being addressed, as Buddhists are given an opportunity to have a holistic practice within the Buddhist system. For example, since most Filipinos get married in a church, the Mabuhay Temple's monastics have secured the government license to perform weddings, so that devotees can have a Buddhist ceremony that also serves as their legal marriage (i.e., the same arrangement as with Christian weddings).

The vision of Foguangshan, however, was not limited to the ethnic Chinese. In time, they used their temples as bases for sharing Buddhism with non-Chinese. For example, the Cebu temple community produced a musical play on the life of the Buddha in 2007, and majority of the participants were Catholic youth. Residential Buddhist camps have been organized in the Bacolod temple, and the Mabuhay Temple in Manila offers a wide range of programs conducted in English. Key to all of this is that the Foguangshan monastics can speak English, unlike majority of the monastics of the traditional temples who could only communicate in Chinese.

Foguangshan has also worked to become more visible in mainstream Filipino society. They organize public celebrations of the Buddha's birthday at malls during the month of May, when schoolchildren are on holiday and often spend their time at malls. The ritual of bathing the Buddha is executed colorfully and attracts the curiosity of many.[57]

Finally, the organization of Foguangshan's lay members into different chapters of BLIA provides a structure for regular Buddhist practice.

Within the Buddhist community, the relationships among the monastics and lay devotees of the temples are very friendly. Foguangshan has also made it a point to be part of this network. With four temples in the Philippines and a coordinated mission and vision, Foguangshan is the biggest Chinese Buddhist movement in the Philippines, and has great potential for growth.

The success of Foguangshan does not bother those in the traditional temples. The monastics and lay devotees I asked about it said that there are different strokes for different folks, and there is no spirit of competition. It is all well and good as long as the Dharma is propagated, even if it means that some of the traditional temples will progressively decline, or attract a different clientele, such as the new immigrants from China.

Future of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines

The programs of the Buddhists in the Philippines have been sustained for decades, and there are signs that the new immigrants from China may take over the task of maintaining the institutions. In the case of the Fayu Temple in Palawan, for example, new immigrants have even established a new temple.

The influx of new immigrants into the country has injected some new life into the temple communities, but I do not see them initiating great revivals in any of the communities. They will help keep the temples alive as their first two generations find their bearings in the Philippines, but the numbers of devotees will probably remain small. There will always be some Chinese who regard temples as cultural centers and have this need met in the Buddhist temples.

If it happens that a temple loses its monastic leadership, then this may signal the beginning of the end of a temple community. However, for the foreseeable future, the leaders in each temple have taken steps to ensure the continuation of temple life beyond their own lifetime.[58] Some temples like Che Wan and Poh Chong continue to invite caigu from China to come and bring fresh blood into the residential temple community. Young monks can also be found at the Seng Guan and Thousand Buddha temples.

Mergers with other temples are also possible. This was the case, for example, in the decision of Bun Su Temple's caigu Zhengyuan to turn over her temple to the larger Chong Hoc Temple. For years, she ran the temple by herself, but when she turned 75, she entrusted the temple to the monks of Chong Hoc while continuing to live in the temple.

It can also happen that, as in the story of the Chu Un Temple in Cebu, existing temples will be turned over to Taiwanese orders like Foguangshan to ensure long-term continuity.

The Taiwanese orders show the most promise in reimagining Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines. Their predominant clientele is still Chinese, but they have presented themselves as a thoroughly modern form of Buddhism that welcomes non-Chinese as well. The Ocean Sky and Mabuhay Temples have modern designs, offer classes in English, and serve tasty vegetarian food. The monastics

at the latter temple have even acquired government licenses to perform marriages, and a few have been held at the Mabuhay Temple. Spiritual, educational, and cultural programs complement the rituals and chanting services that are staples of temple life.

Because of these programs, Ocean Sky and the Foguangshan temples are attracting younger generations of Chinese Filipinos who are in search of a spiritual path. Most of these young people are also baptized Catholics, but some form of Buddhist practice is now an alternative for them. The completely Chinese environments of the traditional temples did not attract them, but they feel at home in temples of Taiwanese origin where the monastics speak English and teach them how to meditate. Some of these young "seekers" may even end up practicing Buddhism exclusively.

Aside from their ability to attract younger Chinese Filipinos, the Taiwanese orders and two of the more progressive temple communities have also set their sights on the mainstream Filipino community. Ocean Sky and the Foguangshan temples offer programs conducted in English, and have a steady non-Chinese clientele. The Miao De Chan and Phu Shian temple communities offer university scholarships to education majors and require them to attend regular classes in Buddhist Studies. These students are not asked to formally convert to Buddhism, but they are being taught Buddhism in the hope that they will share it with others, not least the young people they will be teaching in the future.

I cannot say with confidence that these new students will eventually develop a Filipino brand of Buddhism, but the potential is there. Now that some Chinese Buddhist communities in the Philippines are using English to promote Buddhism, another question that arises is the relationship between Buddhism and its Chinese face. If a Chinese Buddhist community is transmitting Buddhism in English, to what extent is it still Chinese Buddhism?

Transmission of Buddhism in English: Buddhism only or Chinese Buddhism?

In the efforts of several Buddhist communities in the Philippines to promote Buddhism in English or even Filipino, there has begun a movement away from the ethnic dimension. The story of TR is instructive in this regard.[59]

TR studied at public schools without any religious instruction. He is a baptized Catholic, but says that there are many things he does not understand about Catholicism because he never studied it formally. For his university studies, he was sponsored by the educational foundation at Phu Shian Temple in Cebu. One of the scholarship's terms was to attend whole-day sessions at the temple twice a month. This is how he began learning about Buddhism, and he pursued this interest by reading about Buddhism on his own. He says that he is formally a Catholic and would observe Catholic rituals in the significant experiences of life, but he is not dogmatic at all and sees no conflict with being a Catholic and enriching himself with Buddhist teachings. He is part of two Facebook pages called Dharma LIBRO (Light Bringers Online) and Filipino Buddhism,[60] both with close to 400 members interested in promoting Buddhism in the Philippines. The members belong to different Buddhist communities but exchange ideas and promote each other's endeavors using English as the common language.

TR teaches mathematics at a Catholic school in Cebu City, but volunteers his time on Sundays to teach basic Buddhism to the current group of scholarship recipients at Phu Shian Temple. He says that it is perfectly natural if Chinese Buddhism will decline in the Philippines, and a Filipino Buddhism will take shape, although he acknowledges that this will develop differently in each community. He is aware of what is happening at places like Ocean Sky and the Foguangshan temples, but says the emphasis at his temple is on preserving Buddhist teachings for the local population. Even if the devotees of the temple have so far been the ethnic Chinese, he says the founder, Master Weici, has always had the vision of propagating Buddhism among Filipinos, and the educational foundation is precisely an effort in the direction of training a new generation of Filipino Buddhists.

TR says that he and some of his companions have chosen to participate in a Buddhist ceremony of taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha,

and understands this to mean that “I accept that the Buddha is the ultimate being, the Enlightened One; that the Dharma is the universal truth, the teachings of the Buddha that we have to follow; and that we must take the Sangha as our model.”[61] He says that there was never any coercion, and they were never asked to renounce their Catholicism. They have learned to chant Buddhist sutras in English.

Chinese Buddhists such as those at Phu Shian Temple are trying to develop a Buddhism for Filipinos that may have its origins in a Chinese Buddhist temple, but is open to developing independently. From my own observations, I can confirm that each community is going about this project in its own way. The Holy Buddhist Temple, run by the charismatic nun Hengji, was often the venue for a Filipino monk to chant and give short talks. The monk goes by the name Vincent and was formerly an ordained Christian. He explored Buddhism in Laos and Cambodia and was ordained in the Theravada tradition, but later sought Mahāyāna ordination in Korea. He also lectured at the Universal Wisdom Foundation, which is another group of lay Buddhists promoting Filipino Buddhism.

It is not only Chinese Buddhists who are promoting a new form of Buddhism. There are also unaffiliated groups that are interested in Tibetan Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh’s Plum Village in Hong Kong has also started operating in the Philippines.[62] The common denominator in all these groups is the use of English or a local language in their activities, and the appeal to educated sectors of Philippine society. It is no longer Chinese Buddhism as such that is being transmitted, but new forms that do not follow previous patterns in the country.

This trend, of an overseas Chinese Buddhist community giving way to a local form of Buddhism, has already been observed elsewhere. Buddhism has adapted to different cultures in its history, but its development in Chinese immigrant communities is a relatively recent phenomenon. The story of Chinese Buddhism in Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, which I will examine in Chapter 3, can be instructive when compared with the Philippine experience.

Buddhism traveled from India to China, became Chinese, and was later brought elsewhere by the sojourning Chinese. At every stage, Buddhism and then Chinese Buddhism has adapted to local circumstances. In the Philippines, its base in the Chinese community, especially its exclusive use of the Chinese language, made it a bastion of Chinese communal identity. While this may be

changing, Chapter 3 will consider how Buddhism adapted to China, and then to overseas Chinese communities, before Chapters 4 and 5 detail the adaptation of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippine setting.

1 Hunt does not provide evidence for his statement that the Chinese who came to the islands were Buddhists. I find it unlikely that these Chinese were ever asked to indicate their religious affiliation. I think it is more probable that Chinese religious rituals were simply labeled “Buddhist” but in fact pointed to a mix of practices that I would call popular religion (defined in Chapter 1), i.e., driven from below rather than directed by monastics.In addition, there is no evidence of temple communities in the Philippines until at least the late 19th century.

2 Cited by Edgar Wickberg (1965, 188). He transliterates the Zamboanga temple’s name from Mandarin as Fu Chuan Temple and cites the “Fei-lu-p’in hua-ch’iao shih-lueh <History of the Overseas Chinese in the Philippines>” (1953, 70). He also cites a Spanish newspaper article that mentions the construction of two temples in Manila in 1889 (China en Filipinas 1889, 135). Lui Chi Tien (Felix 1969, 206, 208), writing in 1969, cites a speech published in the 23 December 1939 Fookien Times newspaper that makes a passing reference to Buddhist religious associations as one of many kinds of overseas Chinese institutions before World War II.

3 In saying that Xingyuan is the originator of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, I am pointing to his arrival as the first time that the three jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha) were formally present in the country and taking refuge became a possibility. Teiser (1996, 16–17) details the importance of the three jewels in Chinese Buddhism, especially the focus on the monastic community. Prior to the arrival of Xingyuan, there was a variety of lay practices that in many instances combined devotion to Guanyin with devotion to deities such as Guandi.

4 “Dharma” means “teaching,” and “taking refuge” is a short ritual of entrusting oneself to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. It is akin to being baptized, or formally identifying oneself as a Buddhist.

5 In this usage, a vihara is a small place for Buddhist spiritual practice, not quite a proper temple.

6 This refers to the period (1972–1981) when President Ferdinand Marcos suspended the Constitution, abolished Congress, and assumed total power in an effort to thwart opposition to his rule. Curfews were imposed and civil freedoms, including freedom of the press, were seriously curtailed. For a general history of the country, see Luis Francia, A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos (New York: Overlook Press, 2010). For a focused study of the period of martial rule, see Belinda Aquino, Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines, 1999).

7 For example, at Seng Guan Temple, I saw photographs of a visit there by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

8 Also known as qinggu or qingxiunü , these women are different from the vegetarian women known as zhaigu of Taiwan, who belong to a syncretic religion that combines elements of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 87). Faqing (1992) traces the history of the caigu form of religious life to the Xiantian tradition. This is a syncretic esoteric religion with many subsects (including Yiguandao, cf. Note 27 in Chapter 3) that combines Daoist and Buddhist beliefs in a quest for Ultimate Truth, which was present in an earlier age known as Xiantian or Former Heaven. In Taiwan, Xiantian developed as a strict form of lay Buddhist practice known as zhaijiao (Jones 1999, 26–29). The most comprehensive study of the caigu is a doctoral dissertation in Chinese by Liu Yi-jung (2005), which describes their origins, development, and contemporary situation in Fujian. On Chinese vegetarian houses in Singapore, see Topley (1954). For a more exhaustive background on

the Xiantian tradition, see Topley (1963) and De Groot (1903, 176–196).

9 Young girls who grow up in the temple called their caigu mentor A-gu , but older caigu were addressed as guniang if they were unmarried, or gupo if they were widows or formerly married (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 87, also in Liu 2005, 67). The lifelong virgins that grow old to be addressed as Guniang are conventionally considered superior to those who became caigu after married life.

10 All this information can be gleaned from Shi Chuanmiao's (2008) entries for each temple, where he provides a brief biographical outline of each temple's succession of leaders.

11 See Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 155–56, 181–84). In the online resource Southern Fujian Buddhist Studies [http://www.nanputuo.com/nptxy/html/201103/0415143773499.html] last accessed 19 September 2012, Chen Quanzhong (2011) also provides a detailed record of Ruijin's accomplishments.

12 As examples see Chen Quanzhong (2011) for Ruijin's projects in China, which involved Soc Yan Temple as well. Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 143–44) mentions the Soc Yan Temple's projects in Fujian. During my field visits to the Kim Sha Temple and the Tsi Tiok Lin Vihara, I also noted the construction projects they were spearheading in Fujian.

13 The Huayan Sutra (Huayan Jing) and the Sutra of the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin (Qianshou Qianyan Guanyin Jingwen).

14 See also Editorial Board for Xingyuan's Memorial Volume (1977, 36–

37). The volume documents many other details in the monastic career of Xingyuan.

15 Cf. Editorial Board for Master Ruijin's Memorial Yearbook (2005, 171) for more details and numerous pictures from the long career of Ruijin. Also, Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 110–113).

16 See Birnbaum (2003b) for an account of Hongyi's career.

17 Ibid.

18 For a full discussion of Yinshun's place in the development of contemporary Chinese Buddhism, refer to the section on Taiwanese movements in Chapter 3. His impressions of Buddhism in the Philippines were recorded in a talk he gave after returning to Taiwan, published as part of his collected works entitled Miaoyun Ji , available online at http://www.yinshun.org.tw/books/. The article on the Philippines can be found at http://www.yinshun.org.tw/books/24/yinshun24-35.html (both sites last accessed on 14 December 2011), in the volume entitled Fofa shi jiushi zhi guang , published online in 1998. Yinshun found the Philippine environment very friendly to Buddhism, and expressed the hope that Buddhism could be the overseas Chinese's link to their ancestral culture. Some of his writings have been translated to English, such as the classic The Way to Buddhahood (Yinshun 1998), and several articles translated by his supporters in Singapore (A Translation of Works by Ven. Yin Shun, Singapore, Mahaprajna Buddhist Society, ca. 1998) and Australia (Selected Translations of Miao Yun 7 vols. Revised Edition. (New South Wales, Hwa Tsang Monastery, Inc. 2010)).

19 Cf. the school's 50th anniversary publication, "Philippine Academy of Sakya at 50" (Manila: Philippine Academy of Sakya, 2010). Also, Shi

Chuanmiao (2008, 32).

20 Cihang, who was inspired by Taixu's vision of reform and was exposed to the seminaries founded by the latter in Xiamen and Wuchang, labored in Taiwan for only six years, from 1948 to 1954, but during this turbulent political period, he looked after the welfare and religious education of monks who had fled to Taiwan from the mainland. He was loyal to the reformist vision of Taixu to the point of accusing Yinshun of rejecting Mahayana in favor of Hinayana ideas (Chu 2006,140). Cihang's body remained incorrupt after his death and his remains are especially revered in Taiwan. See Kan Zhengzong, Taiwan Gaoseng <Taiwan's Eminent Monks>. (Taipei: Puti Changqing Chubanshe, 1996, 47–92). Charles Jones (1999, 102ff.) also details Cihang's monastic career in China, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan.

21 Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 121). This fact is also recorded in the Manila Samantabhadra Institute's unpublished brief history, made available to me by Cristina Go-Hager, a niece of Liu Meisheng who helps with the school's administration.

22 From an interview with Shi Fajing of Un Siu Temple, 4 October 2010. See also Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 121).

23 For example, Ruman was originally serving at Seng Guan Temple but after close to ten years, established the Manila Buddha Temple. Similarly, Chuanchan and Jiejin were originally serving at the Thousand Buddha Temple but were later invited to take charge of the Hoc Chuan and Sam Po Temples in Zamboanga. In Cebu, Weici was teaching at Samantabhadra Institute when he was asked to take charge of the Phu Sian (formerly Dinghui) Temple. The entries on these temples in this chapter and in Shi Chuanmiao (2008) provide more details.

24 This was the case at Bacolod's Fa Tzang Temple and Zamboanga's Sam Po Temple.

25 At the Philippine Academy of Sakya, the retired Principal and caigu Chongcheng told me that at Hai En Temple where she resides, a total of seven girls have been raised to adulthood. Two left to live their own lives, but five are still connected to the temple. Three are working at the school, one of them the nun Zongdao . Personal interview, 6 August 2010.

26 It was Master Hongyi who perpetuated the status of the caigu as lay Buddhists, appreciating their work in the temples but also effectively saying that women are not fit to become monastics, or are incapable of keeping the vinaya rules. This position was subsequently taken for granted by subsequent monks such as Taixu and Yinguang (Liu 2005, 222). Liu asserts that the present-day caigu consciously choose the caigu's way of life and are quite unlike the previous generations of caigu who had less options, or were forced to get ordained if they wanted to exercise leadership in temples (Ibid., 223).

27 Interview with Guangzhi , 13 April 2011.

28 This information comes from Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 160).

29 Both nuns are mentioned in Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 88), but the data on their present occupation came from my fieldwork.

30 For example, Xingyuan was the honorary abbot of Hai En Temple, and Ruijin of the Wan Tong Temple.

31 The caigu Sanglian had adopted her father, and she was then brought to the temple at the age of three to be brought up by Sanglian (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 138; also fieldwork conversations with Miaozhen/Hengji).

32 Their names are Fajing and Falian . I interviewed Fajing on 4 October 2010.

33 One example is the Fu Yan Buddhist Institute (Fuyan foxueyuan) in Xinzhu , where many of the monastics from the Philippines studied.

34 The Nationalist government in Taiwan had a treaty with the Philippines, signed in 1947, which included support for Chinese language education in the Philippines. For a discussion of this and related issues, see Jesus E. Perpinan, “New Controversy over Chinese Schools,” in Chinese Participation in Philippine Culture and Economy, ed. Shubert S.C. Liao (Manila: Bookman, Inc., 1964, 332).

35 This is to be distinguished from the three jewels of Buddhism (Cf. Note 4). The same Chinese term is used by devotees to refer to the three Buddhas enshrined in the temple’s main hall.

36 For a discussion of Chinese and Buddhist funerary practices, see Wolf’s (1974, 131–182) article on “Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors” where he discusses the intricacies of keeping ancestral tablets in the home. Feuchtwang (2001, 40) provides evidence from Taiwan about rituals associated with ancestral tablets. Teiser (1996, 22) discusses them as part of Chinese popular religion, and Watson (1988, 13) describes them as part of funerary rituals in late imperial China.

37 For the role of Dizang in Chinese Buddhist practice, see Zhiru (2007), who studied the development of the Dizang cult in medieval China, including pre-10th century texts that referred to Dizang and the accretions that culminated in the tenth-century sutra. In Chapter 4, I also discuss the background to funerary texts such as the Sutra of the Past Vows of K itigarbha.

38 I observed this practice at all the temples that served vegetarian lunches after the services. The food sponsors were acknowledged with red strips of paper tacked to a notice board, or they would be acknowledged by the monastics at the end of the service.

39 See the section in Chapter 4 on “Food Bestowal Rituals.”

40 I attended a few of these classes in both temples during my fieldwork.

41 I will say more about divination in Chapter 4 when I discuss oracle texts and the attitude of monastics to such practices in their temples.

42 Several informants, who otherwise shunned so-called superstitious practices and strove to follow an exclusively Buddhist path, admitted turning to divination using the Guanyin oracle sticks, but they all said this was only during desperate times and that it happened very rarely.

43 This is already a very generous estimate on the part of the school administrators I interviewed. A national survey of the ethnic Chinese done in 1995 says that only 13 percent of Chinese Filipinos still speak any form of

Chinese at home (Ang-See 1997, 52).

44 The information comes from my fieldwork. Appendix D details the publications and social projects of Chinese Buddhist organizations in the Philippines.

45 These were written by Shi Miaoqin (1998) and Shi Yinshun (1960a, 1960b). Both series have been translated into English by the Hwa Tsang Monastery in Australia; see Miao Qin (2001) and Yin-shun (2010).

46 Fisher (2011) describes the distribution of morality books and other popular literature as a form of lay Buddhist practice in contemporary China and Taiwan with historical roots in the Song dynasty.

47 My fieldwork was limited to Buddhist temples, but I observed a significant number of Daoist or folk temples dedicated to deities such as Baosheng Dadi and Yaochi Jinmu . On a random visit to a large Daoist temple in Metro Manila on 8 June 2011, the Kiu Pat Liong Shiao Temple in Parañaque City, the caretaker Mr. Tan told me that folk and Daoist temples taken together would far outnumber the Buddhist ones. I am not in a position to validate this claim, but I provide this information to give an indication of the diversity of Chinese religions present in the Philippines.

48 I will develop the topic of syncretism, as well as discuss the future of Buddhism in the Philippines, in Chapters 4 and 6.

49 Personal interview, 20 November 2010. To protect their privacy, I indicate only the initials of my informants, and these can be from their English

or Chinese names.

50 Described in Chapter 3, on the Taiwanese Buddhist associations.

51 Personal interview, 16 November 2010.

52 There may be a gender issue here as well. Aside from the lack of consultation, it is possible that the all-male members of the board found it unacceptable to transfer leadership of the temple from monks to nuns. The topic was very sensitive and I did not have access to the names of the board members who opposed the nuns.

53 I will not mention names to protect the privacy of individuals and institutions, but in one city, monastics invited from abroad ultimately decided to build their own temple rather than staff an existing one, precisely for purposes of autonomy from the lay board. In another case, the female monastic accepted to defer to the board in regard to her workload and her relationship with other temples.

54 I witnessed a daily sign of the school's relationship with the temple. One day, I happened to be invited to lunch and witnessed the arrival of the School Principal and several Chinese language teachers at the temple refectory. They were vegetarian and were welcomed to the temple for lunch each day, a meal held in silence while the monastics were present.

55 Personal interview, 18 August 2010.

56 On my field visits, I noticed the presence of devotees who attended services both at Foguangshan and at a traditional temple. They told me that while they kept their loyalty to the traditional temple because of historical and family ties, they found the modern and progressive style of Foguangshan very attractive.

57 I not only attended but participated in one such event held at the SM Mall of Asia on 14 May 2011. Since the organizers knew that I was a Catholic priest, they requested me to read the Pope's annual message to Buddhists on the occasion of the Buddha's birthday.

58 One exception is the Po Lian Temple in Davao. In October 2012, the lay caretaker of the temple, Ms. Hong Binhua, passed away and her family has not yet decided on the future of the temple.

59 Interview on 19 June 2012.

60 https://www.facebook.com/groups/dharmalibro/ and https://www.facebook.com/groups/59655725986/ (last accessed 30 March 2015).

61 From 19 June 2012 interview

62 They have no temple yet but this link is about a retreat they organized in the Philippines in October 2014: http://www.plumvillageasia.org/index.php/philippines/91-breathe-smile-now-4-day-mindfulness-retreat (last accessed 31 March 2015).

CHAPTER 3

Buddhism as a Chinese Religion

The Chineseness of Chinese Buddhism

Buddhism originated in India, and yet after ten centuries in China it had acquired a form that was unmistakably Chinese. Texts were translated, and in this very act, sinification or the process of "turning Chinese," was at work as teams of translators struggled to express Buddhist ideas by using Chinese words or creating new ones (Zürcher 1989, 140, 146; Sharf 2002a, 5, 20; Sen 2003, 134). There was no canon of scripture that was transmitted from India, so even the selection of texts to be translated was an act that determined the mode of Buddhism that would be transmitted. There was no governing authority, so the process by which the Buddhism of India was propagated in China was very fluid. The India and China of the time were not static realities. Both were in a constant state of flux and it was in this kind of environment that Buddhism established itself in China. As Stephen Teiser says in his overview of Buddhism in China, "Native and foreign (or the various words authors used for Chinese and Indian) were continually redefined in relation to each other; they were rhetorical claims rather than fixed identities" (Teiser 2005, 1160).

The development of Buddhism in China is generally classified into four stages: the initial encounter of the first three centuries of the Common Era, the period of "domestication" or "formation" from the 4th to the 6th centuries when Indian texts were being translated into Chinese, the phase of independent growth from the 7th to the 10th centuries when distinct Chinese elaborations of Buddhism began to appear, and the period from the 10th century onward when Buddhism became a religion of the masses into the modern period.[1]

Viewed as the gradual sinification of Buddhism, the growth of Buddhism in China can also be understood in terms of Chinese Buddhism's relationship with India. Until the 10th century, there was sustained albeit scarce interaction between Indian and Chinese monks traveling in both directions, doing translation work and elaborating the teachings. But after the 10th century, Chinese Buddhism attained a maturity that made it unnecessary to depend any further on India for its growth. For a time, the link to India remained important, but eventually, Chinese Buddhism became independent (Sen 2003, 102–142).

In what follows I will briefly examine the transformation of Buddhism in China

in religious, cultural, and social terms, fully aware that I am selecting elements that developed over the course of centuries and among different classes of people—the aristocracy, the monastic community, the scholarly class, and the popular Buddhism of the masses.

Religious and cultural adaptation

In considering how Buddhist teaching developed in China, a distinction can be made between teachings that originated in India but became much more prominent in China, and teachings that were originally elaborated only in China.

In the teachings that were appropriated for the Chinese audience, Buddhism had to contend with pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophy. It was not just a matter of translating words, but of making ideas like karma, no-self,[2] rebirth, nirvana, and the complexity of Buddhist cosmology intelligible to a Chinese audience (Teiser 2005, 1161). As the Mahāyāna tradition evolved in China, certain teachings came to dominate and became central articles of Chinese Buddhism even if these were not dominant teachings in India.

To list only the main teachings that would come to characterize Chinese Buddhism, I must mention the ideas of skillful means, the bodhisattva ideal, the infinite lifespans of the Buddha, the existence of multiple Buddhas presiding over distinct Buddha-realms, and the possibility of enlightenment in a short span of time. These teachings were promoted in texts such as the Lotus Sutra (Saddharma Pu arīka Sūtra, Miaofa Lianhua Jing) and the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā, , Bore Boluomiduo) literature, texts that were translated and even retranslated by foreign monks working in China. Foremost among the highlighted teachings was the doctrine of Buddha-nature, the idea that all sentient beings have the potential for Buddhahood and therefore, universal salvation was possible (Gregory 1991, 12–13). This teaching seems to have been given comparatively less importance in India, but in Chinese thought it contributed a fresh approach to the problem of human nature and the basis of morality.

The doctrine of Buddha-nature appears prominently in the Mahayana Nirvana Sutra (Mahāparinirvā a Sūtra, Niepan Jing), whose Indian text was probably composed at different stages from the 2nd century CE.[3] Three Chinese translations are extant from the 5th century and the text is the “historical starting point as well as the chief scriptural basis for enquiry into the problem of the Buddha-nature in China” (Liu 1982, 64). The text was also translated in Tibetan, but it was in China that its versions had the greatest impact, while the survival of

only a few fragments of its Sanskrit original, covering just the initial section of the sutra, suggest its relative obscurity in India (Blum 2004).

The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana (Dacheng qixin lun) is a 6th century CE indigenous Chinese text[4] that radicalized the meaning of Buddha-nature to mean original enlightenment. At a later stage, Buddha-nature would even be extended to include non-sentient beings. This teaching made salvation accessible to all and became a hallmark of Chinese Buddhism.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the adaptation of Buddhist teaching to the Chinese context is in the classification of texts into “schools” of Chinese Buddhism. Weinstein (1989, 257) has pointed out that zong , translated into English as “school,” could mean a specific doctrine, the underlying theme of a text, or a distinct philosophical school. The latter refers to a tradition that can be traced to a founder who then entrusts his teachings to his Dharma heirs. The “schools” therefore referred to teachings and lineages that were not mutually exclusive in theory and practice (Weinstein 1989, 261; Teiser 2005, 1162, 1165). By the second half of the Tang dynasty, three full-fledged schools could be identified: Tiantai , Huayan , and Chan (Weinstein 1989, 261).

The Tiantai school complemented the Chinese penchant for classification and privileged the Lotus Sutra as the highest teaching; one of its distinctive contributions was a classification of teachings known as panjiao that successfully accounted for the doctrinal heterogeneity of Buddhism by maintaining that the Buddha had preached different tenets and sutras, from the Hīnayāna to the Lotus Sutra, at different stages of his career (Zürcher 1989a, 147). The Flower Garland Sutra (Avata saka Sūtra, Huayan Jing) of the Huayan school was concerned with the metaphysical underpinnings of reality. The Chan school, traced to Bodhidharma as the founder of Chinese Chan, taught the possibility of sudden enlightenment and gave birth to lineages that have continued to the present time (Weinstein 1989, 261).

The Pure Land or jingtu teaching on salvation through faith is often considered a “school,” but recent scholarship has drawn attention to the fact that Pure Land was not a distinct school but rather a devotion that could exist simultaneously with various doctrinal or institutional traditions.[5]

These various traditions show that unique Buddhist teachings evolved in China independently of India, and provided a direction for its later development among

overseas Chinese. As Robert Sharf (2002a, 6) succinctly put it, “The Chinese were ready and willing to distance themselves from the unquestioned authority of the Indian tradition and to strike out in new directions.”

Integral to faith in the Pure Land is the unique practice of devotion to the name of Amitābha Buddha, known as nianfo , a feature that is shared to some extent in all the Chinese schools of Buddhism. The bodhisattva Guanyin, who in the Pure Land tradition assists Amitābha Buddha, was originally a male figure known as Avalokiteśvara, but used skillful means to project himself in a way that would speak to the Chinese.[6] Guanyin in her various manifestations as giver of children or mediator of compassion has a special place in Chinese Buddhism. Similarly, Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, underwent a transformation in China and became the pot-bellied, laughing Buddha that earned the devotion of Chinese Buddhists (Chen 1973, 6–8).

The teaching on Buddha nature and the syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism are examples of Buddhist ideas becoming prominent in China even if they were marginal in India. Schopen (2005) demonstrates how Mahayana was developing significantly in China in the period up to the 5th century CE, but not in India. There is no evidence, for example, that the Perfection of Wisdom literature was popular in India before the 11th century, but in China these texts were already “of paramount importance” in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries (Schopen 2005, 5). This shows us again how something marginal in Indian Buddhism could become prominent in Chinese Buddhism.

The other mode of development in Chinese Buddhism was the original elaboration of certain teachings. A prime example would be the Heart Sutra (Xin Jing)[7] which will be discussed in Chapter 4 along with other texts that are prominent in the Philippines. Another important text in Chinese Buddhism is the Śūra gama Sūtra (Lengyan Jing).[8]

The Śūra gama Sūtra is dated at the beginning of the 8th century CE and is also considered a Chinese indigenous text. It is noted for its profound insight into meditation and the vision it offers of the natural world. James Benn (2008) has demonstrated how much of the text is patterned after Chinese literary forms that were prevalent during that period. The author of the sutra even uses references to existing literary works in medieval China (Benn 2008, 66) such as descriptions of jellyfish and wasps as beings that exist in the conventional world. The Śūra gama Sūtra, probably like the Heart Sutra, is not a translation from an Indian

original, but a Chinese text. Nevertheless the spiritual value of these texts is in no way diminished for Chinese Buddhists.

Chinese Buddhist religious life is also characterized by funerary practices. Looking after the dead was an extension of filial piety, and in Chinese Buddhism the Ghost Festival (a.k.a. Yulanpen or Ullambana) during the seventh lunar month, along with other practices such as the construction of monasteries or chapels to earn merit for the deceased, became very popular. Buddhist monks argued that such observances were more efficacious when carried out in a Buddhist context (Teiser 2005, 1162).

Stephen Teiser's The Scripture on the Ten Kings traces the development of the Chinese Buddhist idea of a purgatory whose duration matches the traditional Chinese mourning period. The Scripture on the Ten Kings is an indigenous text dating from the 9th century CE that has endured in popular practice. Teiser describes the bureaucratic nature of the Chinese spirit's journey and offerings that must be made by the living. On every seventh day after death, the deceased, imaged as a prisoner, undergoes a trial and with the requisite gifts from the family, is sent by the presiding judge or king to the next court. This explains the forty-nine-day immediate mourning period, a custom that has its roots in the Indian Sarvāstivāda tradition (Teiser 1994, 23) and also forms part of the Tibetan Book of the Dead.[9]

Three more trials are held on the 100th day, the first month after the first full year, and during the third year after death. It is only at this point that rebirth takes place. While the initial forty-nine-day mourning period has roots in India, the complete three-year mourning period is a Chinese custom that can be traced back to the teaching of Confucius that parents must be mourned for three years as the highest expression of grief. The three years are reckoned as twenty-five months, or beyond two full cycles of four seasons.[10]

The Chinese Buddhist mourning period is therefore an example of a unique Chinese elaboration on a Buddhist teaching. The Buddhist process of rebirth has been integrated with Chinese ideas about filial piety, the afterlife, purgatory, and mourning practices prescribed by Confucius.

In all these elaborations on the religious adaptation of Buddhism in China, at least two models are at work. On the one hand, there was the Chinese attempt to understand the Buddhism of India and translate it for a Chinese audience, often

choosing teachings that were comprehensible to the Chinese even if these were not mainstream in Indian Buddhism. The doctrine of the Buddha-nature and the idea of a Pure Land are clear examples of this. On the other hand, there was the original Chinese development of Buddhist teachings, as evidenced by the roots of the Heart and Śūra gama sutras, and the popularization of the Scripture on the Ten Kings. Robert Sharf takes the middle path when he says that most scholars

would prefer to steer a middle course between the two extremes, highlighting both the profound influence of Buddhism on Chinese culture and the manner in which Buddhism was altered as it was rendered into a Chinese idiom (Sharf 2002a, 10).

It must also be emphasized that the process of religious adaptation did not take place only at the doctrinal level. The translation of texts and the original elaboration of teachings were informed by practices that became popular among the people. Chinese Buddhists across social classes practiced Pure Land devotions, Buddhist death rituals, and Chan meditation; the use of spells and invocations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas attracted the masses (Zürcher 1989, 145-46). Buddhist practices were adapted from existing rituals or traditions, some of them from the native Daoist tradition. One example of this is the way Guandi , the Chinese God of War, became the Door God, protector of Buddhist temples in a process that Prasenjit Duara (1988, 781) calls the “superscribing of symbols.” Buddhists in China were actively engaging the local religious scene.

The aspect of practice, especially the interaction with local traditions, is particularly important when I examine the field data in the Philippines, where different levels of practice as well as syncretism can be observed.

Beyond what can be considered properly religious in terms of beliefs and practices, Chinese Buddhism also contributed to Chinese culture. It was not only that a foreign religion came to assume a Chinese face. The development of Chinese Buddhism also led to lasting effects on the cultural expressions of China.

In the concluding chapter of Buddhism in China, Kenneth Chen (1964) enumerates some contributions of Buddhism to Chinese culture. He mentions the

influence of Buddhism on Neo-Confucianism and Daoism, Chan visions in landscape painting, Buddhist monks' work in astronomy, and Bodhidharma's regime of martial arts in the Shaolin temple. But perhaps the most immediately felt contribution of Chinese Buddhism to Chinese culture is in the Buddhist roots of Chinese words and expressions.

Buddhist terminology, either as translations or transliterations, have become part of ordinary language even in the present day, without Chinese speakers necessarily being aware that certain words or expressions are Buddhist in origin. Chen (1964, 478) lists the following examples: zhong sheng , sentient beings; yinyuan , karma; chujia , leaving the household life; ta , pagoda; pusa , bodhisattva; and luohan , arhat. He also explores the Buddhist references in Tang and Song poetry (Chen 1973, 179ff.).

Language expresses a people's view of the world, and is always being transformed by experience. That Buddhist ideas have become part of the Chinese language demonstrates that Buddhism did not remain a foreign entity in China, but had enduring contributions to Chinese culture.

Social adaptation

As for Chinese society, one can find many traces of Buddhism as well. Some adaptations of Buddhism struck at the core of the Chinese value system. The celibacy of the monks, for example, was seen as anathema to the expression of filial piety by begetting offspring, but the early monastics explained that bringing salvation to one's ancestors was more important than ensuring their posterity through the birth of children (Teiser 2005, 1160; Chen 1973, 45). To give importance to Chinese values, however, the monastic life was organized using kinship and lineage terms and structures that subtly made up for its replacement of the Chinese family system (Teiser 1996, 28; 2005, 1163).

The Ghost Festival, mentioned earlier, was not only an occasion for remembering ancestors, but was anchored on a story of filial piety—that of Mulian saving his mother from the fires of the netherworld.[11]

These are specific ways in which filial piety was observed in a Chinese Buddhist context, but the value itself of filial piety is not something that Buddhism encountered only in China, as is commonly held. For example, Kenneth Chen (1964, 179), among others, concluded from studies of the inscriptions at the 5th century CE caves in Longmen that the references to filial piety in the inscriptions show how Buddhism adapted itself to the Chinese context. Andre Bareau (1976) and Gregory Schopen (1984), however, have examined Indian epigraphical evidence, some dated centuries ahead of the Longmen caves, that show Indian monks and laity making lasting offerings for the merit of parents, both living and deceased. It was not only the Chinese that observed filial piety through merit-making activities, but the adaptation of Buddhism to China was made easier by values shared with Indian Buddhism.

As for the monks' livelihood, the tradition of mendicancy did not take root in China and is not identified with Chinese Buddhism. As an extension of state support for Buddhism, monks were granted land and traded these along with other goods (Chen 1964, 251). Well into the 20th century, Holmes Welch could declare, "China was never such a Buddhist country that monks were excused from paying their way" (Welch 1967, 328). Individual monks had personal income from fees charged for services or gifts from the laity, and used these

funds for their personal needs and for traveling.

Buddhism left a permanent mark in more subtle aspects of Chinese life. In a creative approach to material culture in China, John Kieschnick (2003) traced the Buddhist influence on objects such as prayer beads,[12] chairs, and the use of sugar and tea in China. He admits, especially with regard to sacred objects, that the origins, meanings, and reinterpretations attached to things like the wooden fish used in Buddhist services are ambiguous and therefore hesitates to describe the process as one of sinicization (p. 154). Neither did he find Mircea Eliade's (1958) model of "degeneration," whereby the masses reinterpret symbols in more mundane ways, an accurate description of the process that unfolded in China. Kieschnick opts for the more neutral position that the history of Buddhist symbols in China is one of "the growth and expansion of the potential of objects as conduits of expression" (p. 156).

Kieschnick also explores how Chinese Buddhism's emphasis on merit-making led to a flourishing industry in the printing of Buddhist books, as well as the construction of monasteries and bridges. The production of these material objects were considered good deeds that brought people closer to the Dharma, and therefore earned rewards for the benefactor.

Jacques Gernet (1995), in Buddhism and Chinese Society, focuses on the economic history of Buddhism in China from the 5th to the 10th centuries. His work leaves us with even more evidence that Chinese Buddhism developed uniquely in China, as economic structures were established that would endure as part of Chinese social life.

Especially during the Tang dynasty (618–907), thousands of Buddhist monasteries were built at state expense. Monks, in turn, were tax exempt and were given the freedom to manage their properties. Such a notion of property was a new concept in China, and grew to become the basis of an economic system that included the concept of permanent assets, loan instruments, the operation of mills and presses, and charitable works funded from the profits of the monastic community. Gernet considers the interpenetration of commerce and religion and the accumulation of communal wealth during this period as "the most important innovation" in the Chinese economy because it "introduced a form of modern capitalism into China" (Gernet 1995, 228).

It was not only monastic assets established through offerings and commercial

revenues and then used as the basis for commercial dealings that was new in Chinese Buddhism and Chinese society. These economic activities were inextricably linked to the accumulation of merit, and were given a communal dimension. The Inexhaustible Treasury, used for liturgical services and charitable works, was a fund built up through the merging of small offerings from individuals and it was believed that such a common effort was religiously more efficacious because the original offering multiplies in value (Gernet 1995, 216).

The interface between the economic and the religious also meant that the laity related with the monastic community in these two ways, without making a distinction. Loans from the Buddhist community carried religious meaning, and non-payment would have karmic effects. This reality would give rise to a complex web of relations that involved:

> … peasants attached to monasteries and incorporated into the samgha [sic.], retainer-monks under the patronage of the great families, communities sponsored by important personalities. This was the communion between the disparate social classes that the great communal festivals and religious associations engendered, joining monks, influential families, and commoners. (Gernet 1995, 310)

The religious, cultural, and social impact of Buddhism on Chinese civilization, briefly examined here, cannot be underestimated. At various levels, Chinese Buddhist thought and practice were quietly becoming part of Chinese identity. Wing-tsit Chan, describing the transformation of Buddhism in China, notes that it as a

> … shift in outlook from individual salvation to universal salvation, in philosophy from extreme doctrines to synthesis, in methods of freedom from religious discipline and philosophical understanding to pietism and practical insight, and in authority from the clergy to the layman himself. (Chan 1957, 116)

All of this unfolded over the course of centuries. The first millennium of the Common Era until the Tang dynasty was the time of encounter, development, and growth, when Indian missionaries and Chinese pilgrims maintained a link to the original sources of Buddhism. With imperial and elite support, Buddhist texts were translated and doctrines were interpreted in the Chinese context. The different Chinese "schools" emerged.

By the end of the 10th century, Chinese Buddhism had severed its links with India (Sen 2003, 141).[13] From being a religion largely exclusive to the monastic elite, it became more and more a popular religion characterized by colorful rituals. There were still Indian monks coming to China and translating texts, but this work had become less important. There were no more outstanding Chinese monks such as Zhiyi (538–597) or Xuanzang (602–664) of the earlier centuries, but lay societies such as the White Lotus spread and the distinction between monastic and lay Buddhism became more marked (Overmyer 1976). The "schools" disappeared as such as a trend toward syncretism developed. Only Chan meditation and Pure Land practice would survive in a recognizable way (Zürcher 1989, 148). With their lack of emphasis on texts and complex doctrines, Chan and Pure Land became more stereotypically popular (Chen 1964, 398).[14] Again, this aspect of practice will be quite important when we consider contemporary Chinese Buddhism.

The result of this development over two millennia is a religious tradition that is both Chinese and Buddhist. The adaptation that took place through language and culture gave Buddhism a Chinese face, and the reflection on Buddhist teaching from a Chinese worldview contributed a body of Chinese writings on such ideas as non-duality and Buddha-nature that could hold its own in any Buddhist environment. The development of Buddhism in China involved a middle path between its transformation in China and its fidelity to the Buddhism brought by Indian and Central Asian monks.[15]

In late imperial China (1368–1912), Buddhist thinking had become so pervasive that it served as the foundation of ethics with the idea that every action had moral consequences. Even Confucian philosophy shifted its focus from principle (li) to the power of the mind (Teiser 2005, 1167).

To conclude this section, we can consider the synthetic spirit of Buddhism in general and Chinese Buddhism in particular. Diverse teachings coexisted and there were efforts to make sense of them. For example, the Tiantai school

classified the teachings in a system of “graded revelation” culminating in the ultimate truth of the Lotus Sutra (Zürcher 1989, 147). The Huayan school privileged the Flower Garland Sutra’s teaching on ultimate reality. Chan meditation’s teaching on sudden enlightenment appealed to the intellectual class, while Pure Land devotionalism was practiced by the masses and the adherents of the other schools developed their own approaches to it. These “schools” could coexist because they were responding to the spiritual contexts of different classes of people, and because they were not mutually exclusive. Chinese Buddhists used the teachings of each school according to their needs, and popular practices like making offerings at the temples and praying for deceased parents remained generic (Teiser 2005, 1166).

From the Song dynasty (960–1279) onward, there was a revival of Confucianism that led to its dominance in political and social life, making Buddhism much less of an intellectual force although popular devotion and monastic life continued. In time, the idea that the three religions of China—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—informed each other and formed a synthetic whole would gain ground.

In this summary of the development of Buddhism in China, my focus has been its transformation into something that over time would be considered native to China. After the major movements in the Tang and Song dynasties, there were no substantial changes in the nature of Buddhism in China. The cultural integration had been accomplished and was bearing fruit in practice. For this reason, I will not present a discussion of Buddhism in China during late imperial times,[16] but instead move forward to the 20th century, when Buddhism in China came to terms with China’s confrontation with the West. This confrontation had different effects. On the one hand, Buddhist ideas were used for political ends in the late Qing dynasty,[17] and on the other hand, exposure to Christianity and Western values would challenge the form of Buddhism in China.

Because Buddhism was adapted to a Chinese setting in more than superficial ways, it can be argued that Chinese Buddhism has the potential to transform contemporary Chinese culture. Whether this is true of Chinese Buddhism outside China is the subject of this study, but as the immediate context for the study of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, it is important to have an understanding of Chinese Buddhism in the 20th century.

Contemporary Chinese Buddhism

Buddhism in China in the 20th Century

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by the decline of the Qing dynasty. It was only a matter of time before the intellectual unrest in China, fuelled by the Qing rulers' failure of leadership against Western powers, would lead to the Republican revolution. One of the most important intellectuals of the late 19th century was Yang Wenhui (1837–1911), who epitomized lay Buddhism to an extraordinary degree. He learned Buddhism by private study and self-cultivation. Seeing that Chinese Buddhism was in decline, partly because of the Manchu interest in Tibetan Buddhism, Yang began an ambitious project to publish the entire Chinese canon and also opened a school to educate Buddhist clergy and laity (Chen 1964, 454). Though these efforts had very limited success, they planted the seeds for the reform of Chinese Buddhism in the 20th century.

In a series of three books, Holmes Welch (1967, 1968, 1972) provides a detailed perspective of 20th century Chinese Buddhism in mainland China. Following his presentation will help establish a general picture of the reality of Chinese Buddhism during this period. Welch devotes his first two volumes to the Republican period of 1900 to 1949, describing monastic institutions and historical developments, then deals in the third volume with the Communist era from Mao Zedong's rise to the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

Some figures may be helpful to generate an image of Chinese Buddhism in China at the beginning of the 20th century. Welch (1967, 3) puts the number of Chinese monks in 1930 at 500,000, living in 100,000 temples. Temples were either hereditary, i.e., privately owned and occupied by a handful of monks, or public and owned by the Buddhist community and populated by dozens if not hundreds of monks. Monks in the public temples were considered the elite, while Welch refers to those in the hereditary temples as the "clerical proletariat." During the Republican period, there were only about 300 large public monasteries where about 25,000 monks lived. This constitutes only five percent of the Buddhist monastic community, which means that the vast majority were clerical proletariat living in thousands of small temples throughout the country. Welch's data deals with the realities of the large public monasteries.

In the first part of The Practice of Chinese Buddhism (1967), Welch describes the state of key monastic institutions—the layout of the monastery, halls for meditation and other activities, observance of rules, hereditary and branch temples, the office of the abbot, and the economic structure. The second part is devoted to the daily life and "career" of a monk, as well as the devotions of a lay Buddhist and the interaction of various sects and schools.

The Buddhist Revival of China (1968) chronicles the fate of Chinese Buddhism at the close of the Qing dynasty and through the Republican era. Figures like the layman Yang Wenhui and the monk Taixu (1890–1947) were exposed to Western knowledge and the structures of Christian missionary organizations, leading them to initiate efforts at reforming monastic life and organizing the Buddhist community into a national association. Taixu's ideas regarding monastic reform, which included the vision of having 10,000 scholar monks in China (Welch 1968, 52), were quite radical; he never lacked critics. Nevertheless, he became the icon of reform. He insisted that monks should not be reduced to ritual specialists, but must be educated to engage the secular world. He was not concerned with buddhas and bodhisattvas because devotion to these usually resulted in superstition. Instead, he advocated the creation of a Pure Land on this earth, a Buddhism for the living or rensheng fojiao , as opposed to what was the emphasis at that time—Buddhist death rituals (Jones 2003, 129; Teiser 2005, 1167). His vision of a "Buddhism for the living" as far as lay Buddhist practice is concerned did not bear fruit in his own lifetime,[18] but later developments, especially the work of his disciples in spreading Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan, can be traced back to his vision.

For Welch, no Buddhist revival took place in China in the sense of restoring something to its original form. There was no restoration of Buddhism's eminence of the Tang and Song dynasties, no new creativity in the arts, no significant growth in the number of buildings and the size of the monastic community. Instead, there were a series of innovations that sought to engage the modern world. Chief among these were Taixu's work in providing Buddhist education for both monks and laity (as against the emphasis on funerary rituals), social work, organization as a national association, and adaptations to the vinaya, the set of rules governing the lives of monks.

That there was no "revival" of Buddhism in China during the Republican period can also be explained by the understanding and use of the term "religion" in government policy. As Vincent Goossaert (2005, 14)[19] has noted, the application

of the term to China during the Republican era led to Chinese religion, hitherto understood as a generic whole with no overarching structure, being divided into institutional forms of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. This also meant that popular practices labeled as superstition began to be banned by the government long before the victory of Communism in China (Ibid., 15). For Buddhism, this meant development along Christian ideas of religion, and a progressive distancing from popular cults, an idea that has been preserved in the Chinese Buddhist temples that strive to remain free of "superstition" (Ibid., 17).

Buddhism under Mao (1972) describes the dramatic changes to Buddhist life under the new Communist regime, although Welch himself notes the difficulty of finding reliable information relating to this period. Religious practice declined as monks were forced to participate in productive labor, attend political study sessions, and subject their monasteries to land reform. Temples and images were destroyed in the early years under Communism, but eventually, the government began investing in the restoration of key Buddhist sites as a means of showcasing freedom of religion and establishing good relations with foreign countries. Like other religions, Buddhism was subject to the Religious Affairs Bureau and a national China Buddhist Association (CBA) was formed. Both of these were instruments of government control over religion.

Throughout this period, monks were largely compliant with government policies, even to the extent of interpreting Buddhist texts to serve Communist ends, e.g., scriptural justification for killing on "compassionate" grounds. The onset of the Cultural Revolution saw Buddhism regarded as superstition, a criticism that had simmered within government circles for at least three years prior to 1966. All temples were then closed and Buddhism practically disappeared, despite the government's prior investment in the preservation of temples and the relationships maintained with Buddhists abroad. Signs of survival would become apparent as the Chinese reform era began in the late 1970s.

Raoul Birnbaum (2003), focuses on the evolution of the monastic community from the Republican era to the turn of the 21st century, noting the revival of the Buddhist institutes dedicated to the training of monks and nuns. A network of these institutes is operating in China, indicating the enduring legacy of the vision of reform that began in the Republican era. The CBA, also envisioned by Taixu and his disciples, continues to function as a national bureaucracy, governing monastic life and serving as the government's mouthpiece to the Buddhist community. There has been government support for some large monasteries

because of their contributions to tourism and the local economy (Birnbaum 2003a, 428–450).

Monastic economies differ from one region to another, but many temples still derive their main income from the performance of rituals. As for monastic leadership, it is those monks and nuns who prove themselves capable in administrative matters that establish careers in the bureaucracy. Those who are more concerned with Buddhist practice retreat to an appropriate temple to lead quiet lives dedicated to spiritual cultivation. The contrast between monk-administrators and those who are more concerned about spiritual practice provides the context for the future of monastic life in China.

The state of Chinese Buddhism in China in the 20th century is the context from which monks came to establish Buddhist temples in the Philippines of the 1930s. It was during the Chinese Republican era, when Taixu was envisioning the reform of Chinese Buddhism. In 1927, he became the abbot of the Nanputuo monastery in Xiamen (Welch 1968, 111), where his vision of creating a Pure Land on earth found expression in charitable activities organized by the monastery that have since been institutionalized. The same concern for charitable projects can be found in Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines, founded by monks who came from Xiamen in the late 1930s.

It is not only Chinese Buddhism in China, however, that is relevant to the Philippine setting. The Chinese Buddhism that developed in Taiwan exhibited patterns that would find resonance in the Philippines.

From the 17th century, Chinese from Fujian had been emigrating to Taiwan, often bringing along statues of Guanyin and worshipping these in makeshift premises until proper temples could be constructed. When these temples were built, they were often named after their older counterparts in South Fujian. Very few monks served in Taiwan throughout the Qing dynasty, often serving only a ritualistic function for funeral rites. In such an environment, syncretism became prevalent, as in the widespread worship of Guanyin as Guanyinma or Mother Guanyin (Jones 1999, 3–14).

Ironically, it was when Taiwan became a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945 that Chinese Buddhist institutions were strengthened. The founders of four major temple communities were all ordained at the same temple in Fuzhou, Fujian, and then began taking disciples and ordaining monks in Taiwan (Ibid., 38–39). This

development provided institutional support for the flourishing of Chinese Buddhist practices in an environment where Japanese Buddhism (with its non-celibate monks and meat diet) was being propagated by the government. The Chinese temples, along with the Buddhist associations, were in critical engagement with Japanese Buddhism in order to survive. The monastic lineages, including education for nuns, were preserved and this would set the stage for the growth of Chinese Buddhism on the island after Japanese colonization ended and the Republican government made Taiwan its base. It is to these Buddhist movements in Taiwan that developed after 1949 that I now turn, as they found their way to the Philippines in due course.

Taiwanese Buddhist associations and missionaries

Aside from Foguangshan, Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan has been represented internationally by the Ciji Gongde Hui (a.k.a. Tzu Chi), founded by the Taiwanese Buddhist nun Zhengyan (b. 1937). Tzu Chi's aim is to "create a Pure Land" in this world through the compassionate work of medical and calamity relief. It operates in close to thirty countries by founding social centers rather than temples. Like Foguangshan, Tzu Chi is committed to Humanistic Buddhism, has a charismatic monastic as a leader, and is international in the extent of its work. The founders of both Foguangshan and Tzu Chi were inspired by Buddhist reformers in the mainland.

To appreciate the link between Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan and the mainland, it is helpful to have some familiarity with the founders of Foguangshan and Tzu Chi.[20]

Master Xingyun, founder of Foguangshan, was born in the mainland in 1927. Influenced by his maternal grandmother, he became a vegetarian at the age of five and was tonsured at the age of twelve. He attended classes under Taixu and read the latter's works extensively.

In 1949, Xingyun followed the Nationalist army to Taiwan as part of the medical relief team. He spent his first few years there as a wandering monk, until in 1954 he became abbot of a temple in Yilan , northeastern Taiwan. His charisma and organizational skills came to the fore as he used modern technology in his preaching and formed a Buddhist choir. From the late 1960s to the 1970s, he founded a magazine, a Buddhist academy, the large Foguangshan complex in Kaohsiung , a children's home, a high school, and a health clinic. As Foguangshan continued its growth in Taiwan, a 1976 visit to the United States opened Xingyun's eyes to the possibility of spreading Buddhism among the overseas Chinese.

Beginning in the 1980s, temples and centers were established around the world, and a large international sangha of 1,300 monastics derives their inspiration from Xingyun. As a vast global network, Foguangshan pursues its goal of spreading Buddhism through four primary methods: providing a cultural link to China, creating links of affinity with influential leaders, sparking people's curiosity in

the hope of planting the seeds of Buddhism, and localizing Buddhist teachings and practice so as to attract more adherents.

Venerable Zhengyan's personal background also has much to do with the Buddhist movement she founded. Mourning the death of her father, she frequented Buddhist temples and heard a nun say that after studying Buddhism in Japan, she no longer found the "dependency of the Chinese priesthood" agreeable (Huang 2005, 189). From Japanese Buddhism thus came Zhengyan's inspiration to make her monasteries economically independent. Monastics must learn to work and there was to be no begging, and no fees collected in exchange for sutra chanting or Dharma ceremonies.

Placing herself in the tradition of indigenous Taiwanese Buddhist practice, which involved vegetarianism and an intense spiritual practice, Zhengyan took refuge with a lay Buddhist, shaved her own head, and meditated on the Lotus Sutra alone.

Zhengyan's tonsure master, Master Yinshun (1906–2005), traces his inspiration to the reform envisioned by Taixu but developed it in a radical way. Fleeing to Taiwan from the mainland in 1949, he devoted much time to studying early Buddhism and concluded that the Buddhism that emerged in India, Central Asia, and later, in China, departed significantly from early Buddhist ideals (Chu 2006, 213). Yinshun's original inspiration was the idea that "all Buddhas have emerged from the human realm; none would ever attain Buddhahood in the heavens."[21] He therefore preferred the term renjian fojiao , Buddhism in the human realm or Humanistic Buddhism, to Taixu's rensheng fojiao , "Buddhism for the living," which was a reaction to ritualistic "Buddhism for the dead." Taixu wanted to reform ritualistic Buddhism but he still emphasized the Pure Land and Buddhist cosmology. Yinshun, in contrast, saw the human realm as the proper place for Buddhist belief and practice to unfold, an insight that is firmly rooted in Early Buddhism (Ritzinger 2010, 317–319).

Yinshun was a scholar who lived in the wake of Taixu and lived long enough for his ideas to influence a whole generation of monastics. He spent two years in Manila as abbot of Seng Guan and Hwa Chong temples, and is considered by many to be the greatest scholar-monk since Xuanzang in the 7th century (Ibid., 318). Though he spent most of his monastic career on scholarly pursuits, publishing prolifically and founding a Buddhist institute for the education of monastics, his vision for Buddhism to actively engage the world inspired the

growth of Buddhist nuns in Taiwan that is unprecedented in Buddhist history (Travagnin 2007). Not only do nuns outnumber monks in contemporary Taiwan, but their accomplishments are considered no less if not more impressive (Jones 1999, 63). Zhengyan is one such example.

She took the basic idea of Humanistic Buddhism to heart in the charitable work of Tzu Chi, linking herself to the Buddhist reform of Yinshun and Taixu.[22] Zhengyan also acknowledges the influence of Catholic nuns who challenged her by saying that Buddhism was only concerned about "self-fulfillment while ignoring the larger problems of society" (Huang 2005, 190).

In the Taiwanese setting, mention must be made of at least two other Buddhist movements. Master Shengyan (1930–2009), like Master Xingyun, was born on the mainland and fled to Taiwan with the Nationalists. Whereas Xingyun and Zhengyan emphasized compassionate service as the true practice of the Mahāyāna ideals, Shengyan became famous for his teaching and practice of Chan Buddhism. Only by purifying the mind, he taught, can one be liberated from attachment to phenomena, and thus realize a Pure Land in this world. Shengyan is also known for his advocacy of environmentalism, which for him is an aid to realizing the Pure Land. His headquarters are at Fagushan , also known as Dharma Drum Mountain, and a few overseas branches exist in the Chinese-speaking world.[23] Fagushan is unique for its pursuit of scholarly research in Buddhism through its Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies and its Dharma Drum University.

Zhongtaishan , a mountain retreat in northern Taiwan, was founded by Master Weijue (b. 1928). It is second only to Foguangshan in the size of its monastic community. The emphasis is on Chan meditation, and a few overseas branches have been established (Kuo 2008, 30–33), including one in the Philippines.

In Taiwanese Buddhism, therefore, although these four major orders have overlapping activities and have all branched out internationally, there are also clear distinctions. Foguangshan is identified mainly with cultural and educational endeavours. Ciji exemplifies the compassionate face of Buddhism all over the world. Fagushan and Zhongtaishan are icons of the contemplative life through Chan study and meditation. All four are clearly Chinese in identity, although only Foguangshan and Ciji can be said to have retained this identity abroad. Fagushan and Zhongtaishan, in their overseas expansion, have attracted non-Chinese by deliberately using other languages to promote meditation.

From the reality of Chinese Buddhism in mainland China and Taiwan, I now turn to the Chinese Buddhist communities in the countries that surround the Philippines. These will provide more context and serve as points for comparison of Chinese Buddhism in countries where both Buddhism and the Chinese community are in the minority.

Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia

As one looks beyond Chinese Buddhism to other forms of Buddhism, it becomes immediately apparent that Buddhism is country-specific and that multiple Buddhisms exist (Ling 1993, 3). Owing to historical and political circumstances, Buddhism developed differently in each country. For purposes of basic classification of the Buddhisms found in Southeast Asia, the usual distinction between Theravada and Mahāyāna immediately identifies Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Laos, and Cambodia as Theravada Buddhist countries. Of the Mahāyāna Buddhist countries in East and Southeast Asia, the focus here will be those where Chinese Buddhism has been brought by Chinese migrants.

Indonesia. Indonesia is a country where the government's policy toward the ethnic Chinese determined the parameters for the growth of Buddhism. Beginning in 1965, the Suharto government implemented an assimilationist policy toward the Chinese, with a view to creating a homogeneous Indonesian nation based on indigenous roots.[24] Since the Chinese were obviously not indigenous, they were required to assimilate the ways of indigenous Indonesians. The Chinese had to adopt Malay names, there were restrictions on the public celebrations of Chinese festivals, and Chinese media, organizations, and schools were all abolished.

With regard to religion, however, the Chinese and all other ethnic minorities were allowed to maintain their religious identities as long as these conformed to the state ideology of Pancasila,[25] which specifies belief in one supreme God (Suryadinata 2005, 78). To survive, Buddhism had to adjust to the requirements of the Indonesian state and in this way preserve its status as one of the official religions.

Earlier, I made the distinction between Chinese religions as the syncretic amalgam practiced by the ethnic Chinese, and Chinese Buddhism per se. In the case of Indonesia, however, Chinese religions were subsumed under the category of Buddhism. The government was sympathetic to Buddhism, for after all, parts of Indonesia once boasted Buddhist empires—the Srivijaya and the Syailendra.[26]

The syncretic Chinese temples, known as klenteng, were required to be transformed into Buddhist temples. Officially, therefore, all generic Chinese temples became “Buddhist” temples even if they enshrined deities from Daoist or folk religion. The Maitreya cult, for example, belonged to a syncretist group called Yiguandao ,[27] but was classified as a Buddhist sect. Then, in a process that continued until the 1990s, temples were slowly stripped of their Chinese elements in an effort to create an “Indonesian” form of Buddhism.[28] The images of Chinese deities were ultimately removed and Chinese festivals could not be celebrated at the temples.

Meanwhile, Indonesian Buddhists strived to articulate an Indonesian form of Buddhism, using a Javanese Buddhist text.[29] This group claimed that a Great Buddha was the equivalent of the one supreme God that the state ideology required.

In summary, Chinese Buddhism in Indonesia could survive only by assuming a Buddhist identity that accommodated many non-Buddhist Chinese deities. Toward the end of Suharto’s rule in the late 1990s, restrictions on religion were relaxed and the ethnic Chinese began to restore their temples. It also became possible to distinguish Daoist or popular Chinese temples from Buddhist ones. In this context, two modern Chinese Buddhist temples were established in Jakarta —Fahai Temple or Dharmasagara, and the Vihara Mahavira Graha, both with links to Taiwan. Suryadinata describes these two temples as “modern in architecture” and “run like businesses” (Suryadinata 2005, 87). Dharmasagara conducts its services using Chinese texts while Mahavira uses both Sanskrit and Chinese texts.

A large Maitreya temple, the newest and biggest in Indonesia, opened in 1999 at a ceremony attended by 10,000 people.

After a much-politicized history, Chinese religions are enjoying a new freedom in Indonesia. It remains to be seen how Chinese Buddhism will fare.

Singapore. Unlike Indonesia where there was an effort to subsume all Chinese religions under the label of Buddhism, the Singapore experience was more similar to Chinese migrant experiences elsewhere. Along with migration came the private and eventually public observance of devotion to popular Chinese

deities. Tong Chee Kiong (2002, 371) notes that the oldest Chinese temple in Singapore is believed to be Shuntian Gong , first built in 1796 and dedicated to the earth deity Tudigong, known in Singapore as Dabogong . After Stamford Raffles established the British settlement in 1819, more temples were built, and these were closely linked with clan associations. The Chinese temples served as community centers where talks on Confucian values were also organized to help preserve Chinese identity and culture.

In early 19th century Singapore, the Chinese temples all combined Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian elements, and they provided the Chinese with a sense of "emotional constancy" (Ling 1993, 158). The Chinese temple exemplified the "cultural and religious values that constitute ethnic membership" (Yao 1987, 171). Thus, both ethnic and cultural identity were asserted in the Chinese temples of the period.[30]

The contemporary period brought a tendency to make distinctions among the Chinese religions.[31] The 1980 census asked citizens to indicate their religious identity, and among the choices were "Daoist" and "Buddhist" (Ling 1993, 158). Ling sees this as an indication of greater ethnic confidence among Chinese Singaporeans. Writing in 2005, Tong places the percentage of Buddhists in Singapore at 30.9%, making it the largest religion in the country (Tong 2002, 370). Within the Chinese community, the government census in 2000 indicates that 54% identify themselves as Buddhists rather than practitioners of Daoism or Chinese traditional beliefs (Kuah-Pearce 2008, 197).

Singapore provided a favorable environment for the growth of the Chinese community, to the extent of promoting the Chinese language in its schools. Along with the rise in the number of university-educated Chinese, this environment became conducive for the renewal of interest in Buddhism in the late 1980s, whereas in the early 1970s, Joseph Tamney was describing Mahāyāna Buddhism as a failure in Singapore (Ling 1993, 160). He was relating upward social mobility with the non-retention of religious beliefs, but while participation at temple devotions may have declined, the renewed interest of the 1980s was in Buddhist teaching rather than temple life. Ling calls this the development of "associational Buddhism" (Ibid., 160), the trend for Buddhists to be organized as associations rather than temple communities.

As early as 1934, lay people in Singapore had an institution called the Forest of Laymen,[32] whose aim was to "purify Buddhism in Singapore." At that stage, the

concern was not so much for Buddhist philosophy as for the promotion of certain practices such as vegetarianism. The Forest of Laymen later became the Singapore Federation of Buddhists and promoted the Chinese contribution to the development of Singapore.

The Singapore Buddhist Lodge was also born from the Forest of Laymen. In the late 1950s, its members were gathering regularly for the chanting of Buddhist sutras. Today it is the most popular Buddhist association in Singapore, and more than ten other such associations have been formed. These associations are characterized by solid membership centered around interest in Buddhist teachings rather than temple devotions. In the Chinese language, these groups were called hui , which can refer to any type of organization, not necessarily religious.

The associations, however, do not limit themselves to the teaching of Buddhist philosophy and ethics. At some centers such as Grace Lodge, sutra chanting is carried out by members who have “taken refuge.” They are not simply members of Grace Lodge. Many start by becoming members and eventually deepen their religious commitment. Rather than private temple worship, therefore, people are initiated into a Buddhist lifestyle through membership in an association. Ling concludes that there is a

noticeable degree of correlation among the Chinese in Singapore between level of education and type of Buddhist practice, that is, either traditional Chinese temple Buddhism on the one hand, and what may now be described as associational Buddhism on the other. (Ling 1993, 168)

Another distinguishing element of Chinese Buddhism in Singapore is the role of the laity in relation to the sangha. Unlike Theravada Buddhism where the monastic community is very visible and takes a leading role, and other Chinese Buddhist contexts where lay participation revolves around a temple community, the various Buddhist associations in Singapore are not dependent on monks or nuns for their maintenance or preservation. Of course, monks and nuns, often from other places like Taiwan, have specific roles as resource persons, but they do not provide the leadership.

Finally, due to the emergence of Buddhist associations in contrast to temple communities, Chinese-Singaporean Buddhists, especially the educated class, are not limited to the Chinese Buddhist tradition. The study of sutras, ethics, and meditation may take its inspiration from Tibetan or Thai forms of Buddhism, leading to a diversity of Buddhist cultures that can be found in the country. Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce describes this trend as “Reformist Buddhism,” also known as “Buddhayana” to emphasize its non-sectarian approach.[33]

What makes Chinese Buddhism in Singapore different is therefore the development of associational or Reformist Buddhism. Aside from the usual temple communities that can also be found elsewhere, there is a strong movement there toward the study of Buddhist philosophy.

Malaysia. The story of Chinese Buddhism in Malaysia is similar to that of Singapore, although the country is much larger. Migrants from Guangdong and Fujian provinces in China established Chinese temples dedicated to various deities. The Chinese religious scene is quite colorful, with the diversity of Daoism and Buddhism mixed with folk religion.

Colin McDougall’s (1956) slim volume on Buddhism in Malaya, as Malaysia was then known, lists the temples and associations that were active at that time. The Cheng Hoon Teng (Qingyun Ting) in Malacca, dating to the 17th century (McDougall 1956, 43), is considered the oldest Buddhist temple in Malaysia, and has resident monks. Penang is recognized as the center of Chinese Buddhism in Malaysia, and several later studies have focused on the area (Liow 1989; Nagata 1994). DeBernardi (2002, 310) describes Malaysian Chinese religious culture and describes the construction of the Temple of Paradise (Jile Si) in Penang in 1904 as a religious and political achievement for the Chinese community.

What can be said about Chinese Buddhism in Malaysia? Tan Teik Beng (Chen Deming) (1988, 26) notes that Chinese Malaysians would not object to being considered Buddhist even if what they actually practiced was the syncretism of Chinese religions. Tan Chee Beng (1995, 153) makes the same observation. Tan Teik Beng’s study on the beliefs and practices among Chinese Malaysian Buddhists describes the Buddhist scene in Malaysia, where Buddhism is not limited to the Chinese community. Theravada (Sinhalese), Thai, and Tibetan

temples are also active and are frequented by Chinese who wish to learn meditation or the Dharma. Especially after the Second World War, lay Chinese Buddhists who felt that Buddhism had been reduced to rituals organized societies for the study of the Buddha's teachings.[34] Many of these associations invite monks from other countries to come and serve as spiritual advisers. Today the associations organize not only study sessions, camps, and other educational activities, but also run schools, clinics, and welfare centers.

Language is an important element of Buddhism in Malaysia. Those who participate in the activities of the lay associations usually affiliate themselves with the association that uses their preferred language. The Malaysian Buddhist Association and the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia are run by Chinese-educated, Chinese-speaking adherents, and promote Chinese Buddhism (Nagata 1994, 327). Not surprisingly, they attract ethnic Chinese who are comfortable in the language.

But not all Chinese Malaysians use Chinese as their main language. Those who are English-educated may be Buddhists who follow the Theravada tradition and practice at a temple where activities are conducted in English. The result is that the Theravada communities count many Chinese among their members and in that way, are multi-ethnic. In Penang, for example, the oldest temples belong to Burmese and Sri Lankan Theravada traditions, but present devotees are 90 percent local Chinese.[35]

Chinese religions in Malaysia had its role in helping the Chinese express their ethnic identity (DeBernardi 2002, 303),[36] but it is also evident that there is a significant proportion of Chinese Malaysian Buddhists who are interested in deepening their knowledge and practice of Buddhism. They are not content with simply carrying out devotions in the temples, but make the effort to learn about Buddhism even if it means joining a non-Chinese Buddhist community. This has led to the unique phenomenon of a Chinese Theravada tradition in Malaysia, especially in Penang.

Nagata (1994) notes how significant numbers of university students have been attracted to the Dharma activities of the chief monk at Ang Hock See , originally a Thai temple until it was taken over by the monk,[37] who is Chinese but is critical of the syncretic practices of Chinese Buddhism. He instituted rigorous study and meditation, and even sent a nun to attend and receive ordination at Master Xuan Hua's (1918–1995)[38] Dharma Realm University in the United

States (Nagata 1994, 321).

The White Cloud Hermitage (Baiyunshan Guanyin Si), also in Penang, is run by Hokkien Chinese monks but promotes Theravada meditation and strict discipline for both monastics and laity. At Ang Hock See and White Cloud Hermitage, following Theravada tradition, chanting is done in Pali and no meals are taken after noon, but the Chinese Buddhist custom of vegetarianism is observed (Nagata 1994, 322). This combination of Theravada and Mahāyāna practice is an example of how various strands of Buddhism can coexist in the same institution, and how ethnic Chinese can give a Chinese identity to traditions outside Chinese Buddhism. In the latter case, the language used may be English, but because the membership is Chinese, it gives new meaning to the category Chinese Buddhist.

In Malaysia indeed, the interaction of Chinese Buddhism with Theravada communities, the predominantly Chinese membership or participation in all the Buddhist temple communities and associations, and the use of both English and Chinese as the media of Buddhist discourse, lend credence to the YBAM's vision of a Malaysian Buddhism that is also identifiably Chinese. In this case, the ethnic identity is Chinese, but owing to the promotion of some Theravada ideas, the religious and cultural identity is being promoted as distinctly Malaysian.

Comparison with Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines

Wherever it has traveled, Buddhism has been dynamic rather than static. It adapts to local conditions, and efforts to develop a new form of Buddhism suited to a new environment are not unusual. In Indonesia, the Suharto government forced all Chinese religions to be subsumed under Buddhism, and this prompted Indonesian Buddhists to develop an indigenous Buddhism based on local languages and texts. The Chinese elements of Buddhism were deliberately removed during the Suharto regime, but since the late 1990s, Chinese religions have been free to operate again. Nevertheless, the movement toward an Indonesian form of Buddhism is already well underway.

In Singapore and Malaysia where there are substantial ethnic Chinese populations, Chinese Buddhism began with ritualistic religion at temples, some of them of folk origin. In time, younger generations of devotees who were university-educated shifted away from a focus on rituals to the study of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism also became nonsectarian and less ethnically based as the adherents used English and learned from Tibetan and other Buddhist traditions. Lay believers rather than monastics often took the lead in these developments, leading to an "associational" form of Buddhism in these two countries.

Malaysia is unique for developing a Malaysian Buddhism that is also Chinese, but not in the sense of being rooted in Chinese forms of Buddhism. Rather, it is Chinese because the practitioners are Chinese, but they combine Mahāyāna Chinese and Theravada practices.

A similar pattern can be observed in the way Chinese Buddhism has developed in the Philippines and in these three Southeast Asian countries. The first generations of overseas Chinese practiced ritualistic Buddhism, also referred to as village Buddhism (Kuah Pearce 2009, 29), clerical/shamanistic Buddhism (Samuel 1993), or Kammatic/Apotropaic Buddhism (Spiro, 1967; 1970).[39] This kind of Buddhism, concerned with earning merit, praying for the dead, and attracting blessings, healing, or protection, helped the Chinese preserve their ethnic identity as well.

A small elite, and the subsequent generations of believers that have benefited from higher levels of education, moved away from rituals and became more

interested in meditation, philosophy, and local adaptation. Gombrich (1971, 243) has described the latter practices as cognitive Buddhism, in contrast to affective Buddhism.

What has already happened in overseas Chinese communities elsewhere, that is, the move away from ritualistic Buddhism, has also begun in the Philippines, especially with the entry of Taiwanese orders into the Philippines. This is a general trend that can be identified, while keeping in mind that it is in the nature of Buddhism for each community in each of these countries to develop uniquely.

In this chapter, we have considered the transformation of Buddhism into a Chinese religion, so that rather than Buddhism in China, we can actually speak of Chinese Buddhism. Buddhism in China was still linked to India and Central Asia during the first millennium of interaction, but it increasingly adapted to the Chinese context and produced a Buddhism that was in tune with Chinese culture. It became Chinese Buddhism and lost its foreign face. In the 20th century, the impact of Christian ideas of religion loosened Chinese Buddhism's links to other Chinese religions, and became more institutionalized in China even as the theory of Humanistic Buddhism gained ground and bore fruit in Taiwan. Together with the development of Chinese Buddhism in different parts of Southeast Asia in the 20th century, our consideration of modern Chinese Buddhism has laid the ground for the detailed study of Chinese Buddhism's adaptation in the Philippine setting.

1 There is general agreement on the broad lines of this periodization, but scholars name the periods differently. Wright (1959) speaks in terms of periods of preparation, domestication, independent growth, and appropriation. This choice of words, however, suggests a purpose in the development of Buddhism in China, as though there was a grand plan, which is certainly not the case. Zürcher (1989) describes the different phases in more objective terms: embryonic, formative, independent growth, premodern China, modern and contemporary China.

2 For a focused study on how Chinese Buddhism transformed the teaching of no-self and in fact "acquired a soul" in China, see Jungnok Park (2012).

3 Ming-Wood Liu (1982, 1989) discusses the development of the Buddha-nature doctrine in China, and particularly in the Mahāparinirvā a Sūtra.

4 William Grosnick (1989) discusses the authorship of the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana and establishes it as an indigenous Chinese text rather than a translation from an Indian original.

5 The combination of Chan and Pure Land practices would characterize Chinese Buddhism from the 10th century to the present. Shih (1992) explores how the seemingly opposite teachings of Chan and Pure Land were synthesized, especially in the work of the Chan monk Yongming Yanshou (904–975). Sharf questions the traditional assumption that Pure Land and Chan were distinct schools, showing that Pure Land devotionalism was part of Chinese Buddhism "irrespective of one's doctrinal or institutional affiliation" (Sharf 2002b, 324).

6 I will discuss Guanyin more thematically in Chapter 4.

7 No Sanskrit title is provided here, for reasons to be explained in Chapter 4.

8 I use the Sanskrit title because the sutra does not have a popular English title, unlike the earlier sutras I have mentioned.

9 This is a funerary text attributed to Padmasambhava (8th century CE) and also known as the Bardo Thodol or the Liberation Through Hearing During the Intermediate State. It is a guide to the process of rebirth that is supposed to take place within forty-nine days after death. For a recent translation, see Graham

Coleman with Thumpten Jinpa, eds., The Tibetan Book of the Dead translated by Gyurme Dorje (London: Penguin, 2005).

10 The logic is that one cycle of four seasons symbolizes a life cycle, and to go beyond double this period in mourning for parents is the highest honor. The mourning period for lesser relations is shorter. These mourning periods, along with other detailed instructions, are set forth in Chapter 35 of the Book of Rites, "Questions about the mourning for three years." The brief chapter ends with a quote from Confucius, "A son, three years after his birth, ceases to be carried in the arms of his parents. The mourning of three years is the universal rule of all under heaven." This further explains the length of the mourning period. For an English translation of the Book of Rites, see F. Max Müller, ed., Sacred Books of the East, vol. 28, Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism, translated by James Legge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885).

11 David Johnson (1995) has written about the story of Mulian as a literary form that is still performed today. There are other stories related to funerary rituals, such as that of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. I present some of these stories in Chapter 4.

12 Kieschnick calls them rosaries and notes how these beads acquired non-religious uses, as when they became part of officials' uniforms in the Qing (Manchu) dynasty. The Manchus were not Han Chinese, making the model of "sinicization" of Buddhist objects problematic.

13 In a chapter entitled "The Termination of the Buddhist Phase in Sino-Indian Interactions," Sen Tansen (2003) shows that the growth of Chinese Buddhism was not due to the decline of Indian Buddhism in the 10th century. Indian Buddhism continued to develop until the 12th century, and Indian monks continued to arrive in China and do translation work. There were linguistic problems in the translations, but by then it was no longer important because Chinese Buddhism had already matured and indigenous texts and teachings

gained ascendancy.

14 As Sharf (2002b) points out, however, this must not be taken to mean that Chan and Pure Land practices were carried out independently of each other and that practice remained on the popular level. There were Chan approaches to Pure Land nianfo and attempts to align monastic and lay practice.

15 Sharf, in the introductory chapter to his reading of the Treasure Store Treatise, notes the historical and hermeneutical problems with the textbook account of the development of Chinese Buddhism. Given the diverse assumptions and definitions of Buddhism throughout history, he shows how Buddhism remains a contested term today. He says that its "meaning should not be sought in some definitive set of myths, doctrines, or practices, but rather in the modes of authority it warranted in diverse cultural and regional settings" (Sharf 2002a, 17).

16 Yü (1981) and Brook (1993a) deal with the late Ming period, especially monastic and lay identity and practice. Chan (1985) focuses on the use of Buddhist thought in political discourse during the late Qing.

17 Chan's (1985) study of Buddhism in late Qing political thought shows how Chinese intellectuals of the late 19th century turned to Buddhism to counter the claims of Christianity and the West. Chan says, "To late Ch'ing intellectuals, Buddhism was no longer a matter confined to monasteries in remote mountain regions, but was part of the political thought of their time which could help the cause of national salvation" (1985, 8).

18 Buddhist institutes for the education of monastics were set up during his time, but his ideas about reforming the practice of Buddhism would need more time to germinate. For further discussion of Taixu's reforms and his influence in

other countries, see DeVido (2009) and Pittman (2001).

19 Goossaert and Palmer have developed this topic in their book The Religious Question in Modern China (2011).

20 My two main sources on Tzu Chi and Foguangshan are Huang (2005) and Chandler (2004). Laliberté (2004) has a slim volume discussing the politics of Buddhist organizations in Taiwan, and devotes a chapter each to Tzu Chi and Foguangshan. Yushuang Yao's Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism: Origins, Organization, Appeal and Social Impact (2012) is actually her 2001 doctoral dissertation and focuses on Tzu Chi as a new religious movement, especially given the profile of its membership.

21 Quoted in William Chu's (2006,213) unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled "A Buddha-Shaped Hole, Yinshun's Critical Buddhology and the Theological Crisis in Modern Chinese Buddhism" (University of California at Los Angeles). From this basic insight, Yinshun devoted his monastic career to Chinese Critical Buddhism, resisting the prevailing idea that non-Mahāyāna sources were somehow deficient. He wrote extensively on Madhyamaka theory, the links of Chan to early Buddhism, and the vinaya. For other focused studies, there are three other Ph.D. dissertations that deal with the thought of Yinshun—Scott Hurley's "A Study of Master Yinshun's Hermeneutics, An Interpretation of the Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine" (University of Arizona, 2001); Marcus Bingenheimer's Der Mönchsgelehrte Yinshun (*1906) und seine Bedeutung für den Chinesisch-Taiwanischen Buddhismus im 20. Jahrhundert. (Würzburg University, 2004); and Stefania Travagnin's "The Madhyamika Dimension of Yinshun, A Restatement of the School of Nagarjuna in 20th Century Chinese Buddhism" (School of Oriental and African Studies, 2009). There is also a Master's thesis by the Buddhist nun Zhiru, "Chinese Master Yinshun's Study of Indian Buddhism, Significance of Historical Re(Construction) for a Contemporary Buddhist Thinker" (University of Michigan, 1993). More than forty volumes of Yinshun's collected works are available online at http://yinshun-edu.org.tw/Master_yinshun/books (last accessed 23 May 2015).

22 In the conclusion to his dissertation, Chu (2006, 440–445) asserts that while many contemporary movements like Foguangshan and Tzu Chi are traced to the influence of Yinshun, their activities are ideologically closer to Taixu's "Buddhism for the living." Yinshun's legacy was in the balance between the twin pillars of compassion, manifested in this-worldly activities, and wisdom, expressed in the rational approach to Buddhist practice and which he carried out in his scholarly work. Chu rightly thinks that Yinshun's full impact on Buddhist practice still remains to be seen. Travagnin (2007), for her part, explores the relationship between Zhengyan and Yinshun, particularly the shift and continuity in the way Zhengyan put Yinshun's teachings into practice.

23 Madsen (2007, 85–103) provides an overview of Dharma Drum Mountain in his book about the political visions of different religious groups in Taiwan. See also Kuo (2008, 28–30).

24 My main source of information on Chinese Buddhism in Indonesia is Suryadinata (2005).

25 The other four principles are humanitarianism, Indonesian unity, representative democracy, and social justice.

26 The Srivijaya empire existed from the 7th to the 14th centuries and grew out of Sumatra, but historiographers became aware of it only after ruins were discovered in the 1920s. Syailendra was a Buddhist king who established a "dynasty" in Central Java. Traces of the Srivijaya have been found in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, as evidenced by a Buddhist Tara image found in a place called Agusan in 1917 (see Cembrano 1998).

27 Yiguandao, which means “The Way of Unity,” is a sect that originated in Shandong, northeast China in the 1930s. Its teachings combine aspects of Chinese Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. After being banned in the People’s Republic of China, it became active in Taiwan and in overseas Chinese communities. The group has several temples throughout the Philippines. For a detailed presentation, see Jordan and Overmyer (1986) and Shahar (1998).

28 For a more detailed study of Indonesian Buddhism, refer to the work of Hudaya Kandahjaya, especially on the first Indonesian monk, Ashin Jinarakkhita. At the time of this study’s completion, his paper entitled “Via Kong Hoa Sie to Borobodur” was not yet published.

29 Refer to previous note on the work of Kandahjaya, who discussed the history and evolution of this indigenous text.

30 For studies of 19th- and 20th-century Chinese religious associations in Singapore, see Topley (1956, 1961); Freedman and Topley (1961). Wee (1976) classifies the different “Buddhisms” that existed at the time of writing, and notes the overlapping notions of Chinese religions and Buddhism.

31 As mentioned earlier, Goossaert (2005, 2011) has studied the historical development of this trend from thinking of Chinese religion as a whole to the individual identities of Chinese religions.

32 A literal translation of the Chinese term jushilin , referring to an association of lay Buddhists.

33 Kuah-Pearce (2008, 2009) focuses her article on the growth of Reformist

Buddhism in Singapore as a reaction to the syncretism of Chinese religions and also of Chinese Buddhism. She also describes the relationship between the State and the Buddhist organizations in providing welfare services.

34 In Penang, as early as 1925, the Penang Buddhist Association was formed to promote Buddhist doctrine as against syncretism and superstition (Nagata 1994, 325). This association was Mandarin-speaking, but Theravada monks in the Thai, Sri Lankan, and Burmese traditions provided the teaching resources. In the 1950s, the Buddhist Youth Circle was formed, which eventually became the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM) in 1970. The YBAM grew to a total of 262 branches throughout Malaysia. It tried to balance Mahāyāna and Theravada teachings, as well as the use of English and Mandarin. It is in tension with the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA), founded in 1959. The MBA serves de facto as the representative of Malaysian Buddhism in interfaith associations and is headed by senior monks with links to China or Taiwan. The YBAM, in contrast, is headed by a local-born Chinese monk who advocates the development of a Malaysian Buddhism that is predominantly Chinese, but free of Taiwanese or other foreign control.

35 Nagata (1994, 317). For a discussion of Buddhist temples and associations in Penang from 1845 to 1948, see Liow (1989).

36 DeBernardi (2002) traces the development of Malaysian Chinese religious culture and the positive function of Chinese religions as symbols of community and subculture.

37 Nagata does not provide the name of the monk.

38 Ven. Xuan Hua (Hsuan Hua) was born in China but established his center in California starting in the 1960s. He began with the Golden Mountain

monastery and the Dharma Realm association, eventually founding the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on 488 acres of fruit farms, and the Dharma Realm University, an international center offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in Buddhism.

39 In his study of Burmese Buddhism, Spiro (1967, 1970) identified three systems of Buddhism—Nibbanic (concerned with personal salvation by way of spiritual practice, mostly confined to monks), Kammatic (concerned with improving one's lot in the cycle of samsara by accumulating merit), and Apotropaic (concerned with deliverance from existential problems like ill health or misfortune).

CHAPTER 4

Scriptures and Devotions

The Religious Dimensions of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines

The religious field

One thing that immediately became apparent during my fieldwork at Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines is the different levels of religious practice that were observable. On the one hand, individuals go to the temples to make their offerings, light incense, or perhaps chant a text on their own. On the other hand, families go to the temple to pray for a deceased member, or a congregation would gather weekly to chant together.

Popular or folk practices, tolerated but not encouraged by the monastic community, are a staple of temple life. These include divination with the Guanyin oracle sticks, burning of paper offerings/spirit money to the gods or ancestors, and devotion to deities shared across Chinese religions, such as Guanyin and Guandi. Lay devotees practice all these within temple premises, but the monastics I spoke to all told me that the practices are from folk religion rather than Buddhism. Nevertheless, the monastics do not try to put a stop to the folk practices.

In devotees' homes, there are even those who, in their family altars, enshrine Buddhist and Catholic images together in what DeBernardi (2009, 147) calls "syncretic amity."

In contrast, there are groups that gather weekly for Chan meditation combined with Pure Land nianfo , study groups, and the publication of commentaries on the sutras of the Chinese Buddhist canon. These practices can be described as belonging to the elite, owing to the smaller number of people involved and the level of education and commitment required.

In temporal terms, there are regular believers who visit the temple every weekend and on all the Buddhist devotion days, as against the seasonal worshippers who come only on the major Chinese festivals like the lunar New Year and the month of the "hungry ghosts."

Such are the varied and rich elements in the religious field.[1] What can be said of the practices that are present in the Chinese Buddhist context but seem to belong more to Chinese popular religion, e.g., the popular practices mentioned above, or the offerings to Tiangong (the god who rules the human realm in Buddhist

cosmology) on the ninth day of each new year? How has Chinese Buddhism been affected by the predominantly Catholic religious culture of the Philippines? What qualities identify Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines?

This is where textuality becomes important as a complement to the actual practice of religion. By examining the texts that guided people in their religious practice, I introduce a dimension that is very important in any study of religion. If fieldwork data serves as the specific context of this study, the texts will link the data to the general context of Chinese Buddhism and Chinese religion. The role of texts in the ministry of monastics, the use of texts in liturgy, and the history and content of privileged texts: all manifest the central role played by texts in the practice of religion. In trying to balance text and context, I am acknowledging the contemporary insight that religious studies involve both textual analysis and anthropological fieldwork.[2]

In recent years, the relationship between fieldwork and the study of religions has received fresh attention (Kapaló and Travagnin 2010). There is a growing movement toward acknowledging the particularities of doing fieldwork to study religions, and going beyond phenomenology in approaching fieldwork (Ibid., 135). Tremlett (2010), reflecting on fieldwork among lowland Christians in the Philippines, highlights the difference between analyzing texts in terms of doctrinal content, and focusing on the interpretive communities that use the texts to make sense of their experiences. Along similar lines, Fisher (2010, 239) cautions against the disproportionate study of texts in East Asian Buddhism to the detriment of paying attention to the experience of living Buddhists. Approaching Buddhism as a religion gives rise to an institutional approach to fieldwork that may not give due credit to the sentiments of informants.

Conscious of these warnings, this chapter begins with a consideration of the texts encountered in the field. The texts are available precisely because they have been handed down, translated, studied, explained, and chanted by generations of believers or scholars working during different periods in the development of Chinese Buddhism. The past can only be studied through its remnants, usually texts or material artifacts that can be analyzed like texts. Since Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines is a contemporary phenomenon, the fieldwork data needs to be placed within the larger tradition to which it belongs. In this way I hope to facilitate an encounter between the tradition of Chinese Buddhism and the actual practice of the Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines.

Richard King (1999, 71) noted how different scholars have dealt with the dichotomies between textual or “canonical” Buddhism and “living” Buddhism.[3] He cites, for example, Richard Gombrich’s study of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, where Gombrich admitted that the doctrine of “no self,” so central in Buddhist teaching, is only understood by scholars and not by ordinary believers.[4] Gombrich calls it the difference between “cognitive” religion where adherents subscribe to the canonical teachings of Buddhism, and “affective” religion where belief in personal survival after death and the efficacy of worshipping the Buddha can coexist with the cognitive beliefs. This is just one example of the discrepancy that often exists between the content of formal texts and the actual religious practice of believers. Part of my task in this chapter is to note the particularity of such discrepancies in the Chinese Buddhism of the Philippines.

In the course of examining the texts, two other themes emerge: devotion to Guanyin and syncretism. These are significant dimensions of the Chinese Buddhist field in the Philippines and will merit some attention.

The religious field we are studying has textual and contextual, elite and popular, and individual and communitarian dimensions. Along these overlapping spectrums, I will argue that the three similarly overlapping themes, namely textuality, devotion to Guanyin, and syncretism, constitute the specific adaptation of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippine context, and contribute to the creation of a unique sense of Chineseness.

Texts and contexts

To the casual observer, the activities at Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines seem to stay on the level of popular religion. There are many rituals and food offerings, chanting, and exotic sights like circumambulating and sitting meditation. It is all very colorful, but a closer examination reveals the central role played by texts in the religious life of the temples. Different texts are being chanted at Dharma assemblies, articles and commentaries are being produced, and various sutras are being adapted for use in the Philippine setting. This section will explore the texts in evidence in the Philippines' Chinese Buddhism, and consider what this evidence indicates about religious practice in the field.

I will begin by examining the monastic engagement with texts in the Philippines, including the way liturgical texts were adapted to the Philippine setting, and then present the background and content of key texts in the liturgical life of the temple communities.

Monastics and texts

In Chapter 2, we considered the backgrounds and main activities of the monks, nuns, and caigu who came to the Philippines in the 20th century. They had varying degrees of academic or scholarly training. Most were ritual specialists, managers, and builders, as might be expected for establishing an institutional religion, but a few were distinguished for their engagement with texts in propagating Buddhism. By examining the texts that they used and produced in the Philippines, we will secure a sense of the place they gave to texts in the Chinese Buddhism that they were establishing in the Philippines.

As indicated earlier, Xingyuan delivered some lectures in China and established institutes there for the training of monks and nuns. He did not, however, engage in such activities after arriving in the Philippines in 1937. He seemed to have left textual work to the monastics he invited to join him in Manila.

Ruman, soon after he arrived in 1939, compiled a liturgy for the use of the local Chinese. The compilation, titled the Nianfo Yigui [5] (Ritual for Chanting the Names of Buddha), it is still in use today. It is a small, thick volume of close to 400 pages and I will consider it in greater detail in the next section on liturgical manuals.

Ruijin also had a formal Buddhist education and experience in teaching at or setting up Buddhist institutes in Fujian. However, in the Philippines, he was more involved in the management and building of temples rather than Dharma talks and other similar activities. Nonetheless, his brief speeches and articles have been collected in one volume (Shi Ruijin 1993).

Miaoqin, given his involvement at the Samantabhadra Institute and his own scholarly interests, wrote a four-volume textbook series on basic Buddhism (using the pen name Shi Huian).[6] Each volume consisted of twelve very brief lessons covering the life of the Buddha, the history of Buddhism, basic doctrines, and ethics. These short lessons were especially designed for the Philippine setting, where the class on Buddhism could take place only once a week.

Yinshun (1960), the eminent scholar-monk, also wrote a series of eight volumes

for use in secondary education. Each volume also consisted of twelve brief lessons. Most of the topics in Miaoqin's basic series were reviewed in Yinshun's text, but more were added, such as teachings on karma and rebirth, several topics relating to Guanyin, and cultural themes such as Buddhist musical instruments.

Zhengzong, using his meditation class at Seng Guan Temple as base, produced a radio show in the 1980s, where he presented Buddhist topics in weekly fifteen-minute recordings.[7] His writings have also been published in five volumes (Shi Zhengzong 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004). These are compilations of brief commentaries on Buddhist stories and texts, written later in his career when he retired to a hermitage in Taiwan. The books were published in Taiwan, but were also distributed among his disciples in Manila.

Zili gave talks after the regular Dharma assemblies at Un Siu Temple. He would take a text popular among lay believers, such as the Universal Gate of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva or the Amitābha Sūtra, and explain it in short installments until he finished the text. He also spoke on the proper spirit behind devotions to K itigarbha or the Medicine Buddha, and the background of Buddhist customs and ritual instruments. Most of these lectures have been transcribed and published.[8]

From 1963 to 1972 when martial rule[9] was declared in the country and all publishing houses were forced to close, Zili also put out a quarterly publication called Tze Hang (Cihang), named in honor of his teacher (Shi Chuanmiao 2008, 55). The quarterly featured short essays, Buddhist stories, excerpts from sutras, and news features on Buddhist events. Writers were invited from Zili's contacts around Southeast Asia.

Weici's (Shi Weici 2008) collected works have also been published in nineteen volumes. These include his commentaries, poems, stories, newspaper columns, and diary.

The monks I have just mentioned belong to the first generation of clerics who came to the Philippines, and were interested in texts. They studied, wrote, and lectured on topics that they deemed relevant to their audience in the Philippines,[10] and their concern was always pastoral rather than scholarly. There was always a concern for brevity, whether in school or temple settings, because time for lectures or for reading was always limited.

Zili's[11] and Weici's students and disciples collected, organized, and published their talks and commentaries. Zhengzong was assisted by disciples in Taiwan to publish his books.[12] The present abbot of Seng Guan Temple, a grandnephew of Ruijin, wrote newspaper columns and published his collected texts (Shi Chuanyin 1999, 2002). These publications were prepared not only for posterity, but with the hope that more people could learn about Buddhism through the dissemination of printed materials.

Compared to this first generation of monastics that produced textbooks and commentaries, the subsequent generation in positions of authority is still coming into its own in regard to texts.

There is one monk who has embraced modern technology by maintaining a web blog.[13] Chuanchan (b. 1962) is abbot of the Hoc Chuan Temple in Zamboanga and publishes online, albeit not regularly, his writings which range from very brief poems or couplets to academic articles and teachings.

Daoyuan (b. 1964), who is abbot of the Manila Buddha Temple, has been publishing a monthly magazine called Buddhism in the Philippines for close to ten years.[14] The magazine always features several pages of colored photographs of events at different temples, and short feature articles on Buddhist inspirational topics.

Of the nuns, Hengzhi [15] is the only one to have published a book, an English translation of a commentary on the Universal Gate of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva by Shi Chuanfa (2009). It was her choice not to be acknowledged in the book as the translator, but this fact is known in the Chinese Buddhist community of Manila.

Aside from the texts written by monastics based in the Philippines, the Taiwanese orders like Foguangshan, Tzu Chi, and Zhongtaishan have numerous publications being distributed among their members in the Philippines, which are mostly the writings of their founders.

The monastics we have just considered constitute only a small percentage of Buddhist religious professionals in the Philippines. Their textual work was occasioned by their personal interest or vision of Buddhism, e.g., the need for formal Buddhist education in the schools and informal education in the temple communities. It is to their credit that in the temples where they are active, there are core groups of believers who do not simply practice popular religion, but

learn Buddhism at a deeper level through the texts they introduced. Several of those I interviewed had the habit of reading Buddhist literature on their own, usually the writings of their teachers.

In a few temples, a set of the entire Chinese Buddhist canon lines the shelves of one wall,[16] and I was told that the volumes serve as a reminder that there is still plenty of Buddhist study to be done, perhaps more than can be accomplished in one lifetime. It would seem that the canon is the place where believers go for orthodox Buddhist teaching, but such studies give way to the needs of the present moment. In the Philippine setting, the need is for very basic Buddhist teaching, and this need is served by the publication of textbooks and magazines. Commentaries in turn educate the faithful about the meaning and content of the texts that they chant. The texts, especially the canon, have an exalted place, but their function is shaped by the realities of the Buddhist community.

Liturgies

The Nianfo Yigui prepared by Ruman and used in most of the temples contains the basic elements for a fahui or Dharma assembly, arranged as liturgies for different occasions. These constitute the opening and closing chants that are part of all assemblies, and include the text for taking refuge, the Amitābha or other appropriate sutras, and the text for transferring merits. The ritual book is used as a basic reference for most occasions, as it contains texts that are used in a variety of circumstances. For example, the text for offering food to the wandering spirits (Food Bestowal Ritual that includes the Great Compassion and Rebirth spells) is used daily by the monastic community, as well as during large assemblies where the lay faithful are present. The Heart Sutra and the Great Compassion Spell are common to a number of different liturgies. Shorter or longer versions of the Names of the Buddhas are used for the weekly assembly or for the beginning or end of the year. The most common texts used in these liturgies are discussed below.

It is clear that many of the texts are focused on Guanyin and Amitābha Buddha, and the desire to be reborn in the Pure Land.

Comparing Ruman's ritual book with the liturgy books used in other diaspora communities,[17] the component texts seem to be the same. A liturgy always begins with the praise of incense or water, and ends with the three refuges and the transference of merit. In between, sutras or spells are chanted as appropriate to the occasion.

Liturgies had to be adapted to the Philippine setting. Chuanmiao (2008, 83–85) observes that compared to China or Taiwan, liturgies in the Philippines are simpler and a smaller number of days are devoted to marking certain feast days. He attributes this to the warm weather in the country, the work schedule of believers, and the fact that monastics have to participate in the chanting at temples other than their own, owing to the small number of religious professionals available in each place.

Chuanmiao gives an example of a Philippine adaptation when he notes that the beginning of the lunar year in Taiwan is marked with ten days of chanting the names of the Buddhas of past, present, and future, 1,000 names for each period.[18]

In the Philippines, however, only the 1,000 names of the Buddhas of the present are chanted over three days. Likewise, only three days are devoted to the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance (Lianghuang Bao Chan)[19] during the seventh lunar month, whereas the same text would require five to seven days in Taiwan.

Not only is the number of chanting days significantly reduced in the Philippines, but attendance of believers also fluctuates, with the biggest number attending the opening and closing sessions. When I attended three-day assemblies at different temples, I observed that the assemblies on the second day had the least number of people.

Owing to the special circumstances of the Chinese in the Philippines such as work commitments that are not friendly to the Buddhist calendar, chanting tends to be simpler and texts are shortened by omitting or skipping over long sections. This is yet another indication that texts such as sutras are important, but their use has to be adapted to the local situation.

Local circumstances also require that feast days not be observed by the temples on the same day, especially by temples that are located close to each other. Several temples have fixed their services on a particular day of the month, and any feast day occurring during the month will be marked on that day. At Un Siu Temple, for example, the Qingming Festival which falls on April 5 is marked only on the 23rd of the lunar month even if there is an interval of a few weeks, because the 23rd is their monthly devotion day.[20] In this way, the temples do not compete for the attendance of devotees. This arrangement also allows families with spirit tablets of their loved ones kept in different temples the opportunity to pay their respects on different days.

Related to the prayers for the dead is the Buddhist observance of a local festival for the dead. The Philippines being a Catholic country, the annual Catholic feast of the dead is All Souls' Day on November 2. This day is preceded by a number of holidays to allow people to travel to their hometowns and pay their respects at the tombs of the deceased. The Chinese now mark this date along with the rest of the nation, even if the Qingming Festival is the traditional Chinese time for undertaking the same ritual. The latter festival is marked in April, but in a much simpler way. The Buddhists mark the Qingming Festival in the temples, but chanting is also organized at the Manila Chinese Cemetery every November.[21]

Another local adaptation is the observance of weekly chanting on Saturday evening or Sunday morning.[22] This follows the Christian practice of having a religious observance on Sunday, and the practical fact of the believers' availability during the weekend.

In sum, Buddhist liturgies in the Philippines were not simply transplanted from China or Taiwan, but adapted to the local context in terms of schedule and content. Local customs were also taken into account when services were arranged on weekends and on the annual day for remembering the dead.

We have just considered the monastic engagement with texts, including liturgical texts adapted for use in the Philippine setting. In the next section, we will examine the background of the texts most commonly used in the Philippines. During fieldwork, I asked each temple community about the texts they used for chanting and study. The following texts were mentioned by all the temple communities as the ones used for temple chanting and private practice.

Privileged texts

Heart Sutra (Xin Jing)

The Heart Sutra is one of the most common texts recited daily by both monks and laity in the Philippines, and a constituent part of various liturgies such as the Mengshan Food Bestowal Ritual and the Dharma assembly to mark the Buddha's birthday. It is found in several places in the Nianfo Yigui and I also observed it being chanted in other contexts such as simple ceremonies for taking refuge. The sutra is a concise summary of key Mahāyāna teachings such as emptiness and dependent origination. It is also considered a powerful magical spell.

The Heart Sutra belongs to the Prajñāpāramitā or Perfection of Wisdom genre of literature.[23] These texts are presented as the teachings of the Buddha, although they appeared some five centuries after the time of the historical Buddha, between 100 BCE and 100 CE. The texts are associated with Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE), a monk of the period who founded the Madhyamaka school that emphasizes the doctrine of emptiness. Legend has it that Nāgārjuna traveled to an underwater kingdom where he first heard of the Prajñāpāramitā literature composed of a million lines of metered verse. Over time the teachings were condensed into the brief Heart Sutra (Yifa et al. 2007a, 16).

The oldest surviving version of the Heart Sutra is the translation attributed to Kumārajīva in the early 5th century (Yifa et. al. 2007a, 18), but the most common version used today is that of Xuanzang, from the 7th century (Ibid., 19–20). The two versions are almost identical, except for the title. Kumārajīva's is called the Majaprajñāpāramitā Great Enlightening Spell (Mohe Bore Boluomi Daming Zhou), which indicates that the text was intended to be a spell rather than a sutra. Xuanzang's version is called a sutra, although it does not begin with the standard "Thus have I heard" of other sutras, to establish that the text comes from the Buddha. In fact, the Buddha is completely absent in the Heart Sutra, as the text is put in the mouth of Guanyin.

The connection to Guanyin is highly significant in Chinese Buddhism, given her exalted status, especially in popular devotion. The text is part of most of the Dharma assemblies I witnessed in the Philippines.

Universal Gate of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva (Guanshiyin Pusa Pumen Pin)

This brief text is chanted either as part of Dharma assemblies or daily morning devotions, by both the monastics and laity that I spoke to. Whether chanted in the temple or at home, it is almost like a spell, believed to have efficacious powers of protection.

The Universal Gate of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva (hereafter, the Universal Gate) is popularly treated as a stand-alone text, but it is actually the 25th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Originally a Sanskrit text, Kumārajīva's Chinese translation in the early 5th century CE is the most widely used today.[24] The Lotus Sutra is about the purpose of the Buddha's manifestation in the world and many teachings are elaborated over twenty-eight chapters, but the 25th is devoted to an explanation of Guanyin's (in the text, Avalokiteśvara's) role.

The Universal Gate has two major sections.[25] The first part is a narrative of the Buddha's dialogue with the assembly, where he explains Guanyin's name and all the skillful means he uses to help others. The second part is written in verse and repeats the main points of the narrative. The text lists many desperate situations where the Buddha says that by calling upon the name of Guanyin, a cry for deliverance will be heard and Guanyin will come to protect and liberate. With such declarations made by the Buddha, it is no wonder that the text became so popular among Chinese Buddhists.

Amitābha Sūtra (Amituo Jing)

Next to the texts explicitly related to Guanyin (the Heart Sutra and the Universal Gate), the Amitābha Sūtra is the most popular text used for regular worship. During my fieldwork, this text was chanted every Sunday at the Seng Guan Temple, and several times a day during the three-day retreat of the meditation group at the same temple. I was also told that this text is often chanted by monastics when they are invited to lead prayers at wakes or funerals.

The text describes the Pure Land presided over by Amitābha Buddha, and the promises made by this Buddha for believers to be reborn in the Pure Land if they are united to him through constant recitation of his name. Implicit in the text is the Mahāyāna belief in multiple Buddha-lands or universes aside from the present one, and the existence of multiple Buddhas presiding over these lands.

There is a large body of literature on the origins of belief and worship of Amitābha Buddha and his Pure Land.[26] There is some evidence showing that Indian and Persian (especially Zoroastrian) beliefs contributed to the emergence of the Amitābha cult, but the cult has been at best marginal in India, whereas it became a significant component of Chinese and other East Asian Buddhisms (Amstutz 1998).

The earliest mention of Amitābha in China is in a 2nd century CE text by Lokak ema, a translation of the Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra that presents meditation practices to help one visualize Amitābha Buddha (Yifa and Romaskiewicz 2007a, 37). The text does not describe the qualities of the Pure Land of Amitābha, dwelling only on the methods of meditation to visualize him. The version of the Amitābha Sūtra that is still in popular use today dates from the early 5th century, when Kumārajīva translated it from the Sanskrit and changed its title to focus on Amitābha. The original title in Sanskrit is the Sūtra.

Kumārajīva's translation of Amitābha's name is also peculiar, though he was likely just following the translation of Lokak ema (Ibid., 40–41). The Sanskrit names refer to two qualities of this Buddha, those of immeasurable light (Amitābha) and immeasurable life (Amitāyus). The Chinese translation Amituo [27] could be a transliteration of Amita, or a contraction of the two qualities of the Buddha. Nevertheless this Buddha has come to be known as Amituofo , and his

name is recited with much devotion in the practice of nianfo or the recitation of the Amitābha's Buddha name in the formula Namu Amituofo .

Chinese Buddhist tradition holds that Pure Land devotion began with Huiyuan, a contemporary of Kumārajīva who gathered 123 monks around him on Mount Lu and made vows in front of an image of Amitābha. The nature of nianfo as practiced by Huiyuan, however, appears to be different from popular practice today. There was more emphasis then on nianfo as a way of concentrating the mind to attain enlightenment rather than the desire to be reborn in the Pure Land (Ibid., 44–48). Over time, a collection of texts related to Buddha Amitābha became part of the Chinese Buddhist canon, with Huiyuan recognized as the founder of Pure Land practice (Ibid., 47).

Whether Pure Land practitioners are able to attain a high level of concentration through nianfo or not, Pure Land devotion is massively popular because of its promise of salvation. Funerary rituals are a hallmark of Chinese religion, and in the Chinese Buddhist context, practices that help one or one's loved ones attain a better afterlife are understandably popular. This was clearly in evidence in the nianfo practices I observed among the Chinese Buddhists of the Philippines.

Spells: Great Compassion (Dabei Zhou), Śūra gama (Lengyan Zhou), Rebirth (Wangsheng Zhou)

Spells are also known as dhāranīs, short texts that are believed to have magical powers, and they are constituent parts of Chinese Buddhist liturgies. The Great Compassion and Rebirth spells are very common in any liturgy for the dead. The Śūra gama Spell is used as a prayer for protection, and some informants told me that it is their preferred text for morning prayers. Below I trace the background of these three popular spells.

i. Great Compassion Spell

The Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin is probably the most striking iconography of this bodhisattva. The image is identified with the Great Compassion Repentance Ritual (Dabeichan Fahui), of which the Great Compassion Spell is a constituent part. The ritual traces its origins to a compilation by the monk Zhili in the 10th century,[28] but the original Sūtra of the Thousand-handed One, Qianshou Jing , was translated into Chinese by Bhagavadharma in the 7th century. Since then it has gone through a few revisions until the simplified version still in use today was formulated during the Qing dynasty (Yü 2001, 263–4). The ritual is used to mark the three feast days of Guanyin.

The highlight of the repentance ritual is the multiple chanting of the Great Compassion Spell, which was already popular even before Zhili composed the ritual. Even today, devotees chant the spell independently of the ritual at the temple.

The ritual begins by declaring Guanyin to be a Buddha of the past named Zhengfaming Rulai , describing her in the present as manifesting a thousand eyes and hands in one body, and teaching all to chant the divine spell in order to be reborn in front of the Buddha.From the Qing dynasty onward, chanting of the

spell has been part of the morning and evening devotions at Chinese Buddhist temples (Ibid., 264, 267).

The belief that water displayed during the chanting of the spell is charged with special power and has curative qualities dates from the Song dynasty (Ibid., 267). Called the Great Compassion water (Dabei shui), devotees today bring bottled water to the performance of the ritual and bring them home for family consumption afterward.

ii. Śūra gama Spell

The Śūra gama Sūtra or Lengyan Jing ,[29] already mentioned in Chapter 3, is dated at the beginning of the 8th century CE and is considered a Chinese indigenous text.

The Śūra gama Spell is found in the first chapter of the sutra, spoken by the Buddha before an assembly and also transmitted to Mañjuśrī in order to protect Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and principal attendant, before he became an arhat. The spell is believed to protect or purify the meditator.

iii. Rebirth Spell

This spell, part of assemblies to pray for the dead and daily morning and evening devotions, is a Pure Land practice. Like other spells, the brief text has been preserved in Sanskrit and simply transliterated into Chinese. It usually follows the chanting of the Amitābha Sūtra, and in the Chinese Buddhist canon, is found right after the Amitābha Sūtra (Taishō 366).

Spells function as magical incantations that have their own inherent power for protection, healing, or other purposes. The frequency with which they are chanted both on the personal and communal levels demonstrates faith in the

efficacy of such spells.

Funerary texts: Sūtra of the Past Vows of the Bodhisattva K itigarbha (Dizang Pusa Benyuan Jing), Food Bestowal Rituals

i. Sutra of the Past Vows of the Bodhisattva K itigarbha

As in most modern Chinese Buddhist temples throughout the world,[30] the major temples in the Philippines all have an ancestral hall called the gongde tang (literally, Hall of Merits), where K itigarbha is enshrined and the spirit tablets of the deceased are kept. Regular devotions to pray for the deceased are observed in these halls, especially during the seventh lunar month, also known as the Hungry Ghosts' Month, and the month of the Yulanpen Festival (fifteenth of the month),[31] as well as the feast day of K itigarbha (thirtieth of the month).

These three dimensions identified with the seventh lunar month demonstrate the confluence of indigenous Chinese beliefs about the nature of the soul and the afterlife, the Chinese value of filial piety, and Buddhist beliefs about karma and rebirth. The Sutra of the Past Vows of the Bodhisattva K itigarbha demonstrates the integration of these beliefs and values. This sutra, along with the Mengshan Food Bestowal Ritual, is a popular text during the three-day Dharma assemblies that I observed at different temples in Manila during the seventh lunar month. Interestingly, similar rites are still being observed in South Fujian, as Ingmar Heise (2012) has shown to be the case in Quanzhou.

The translation of this sutra is often attributed to the Khotanese monk Sik ānanda (652–710), who arrived in Chang'an in the late 7th century and undertook substantial translation work on the Avata saka Sūtra. However, scholarly opinion considers the sutra an indigenous and anonymous Chinese text (Yifa and Romaskiewicz 2007b, 263) dated to the 10th century CE.[32]

The sutra builds on Chinese beliefs about the soul that had been prevalent in China from at least the 2nd century BCE. For example, it reflects the belief that the soul has two components that separate at death: the hun that ascends to an afterlife and the po that returns to the earth. Chinese funerary rituals have the aim of ensuring a good journey for these two components, especially so that they

do not cause harm to the living (Yü 1987). The K itigarbha Sūtra prescribes the recitation of the sutra as a method for releasing those who have been reborn in the hell realms, or even to prevent such a rebirth if enough merits are transferred in time.[33]

The sutra describes a cosmology of the hells that departs from Chinese conceptions of hell (Ibid., 266–275). A very Chinese sensibility remains, however, in the description of offenses that merit rebirth in the most horrific level of hell. Unfilial children could be reborn in this hell, and as a counterpoint to such a despicable fate, the sutra includes stories of the Buddha and K itigarbha themselves practicing filial piety.[34] The sutra begins with a description of the Buddha preaching the Dharma to his mother, Queen Maya, who had died just seven days after giving birth to him. There is also a description of K itigarbha's past life as a girl who rescued her mother from the depths of hell[35] by making generous offerings to a temple that enshrined the Buddha.

By definition, a bodhisattva is ready to assist all those who are suffering and lead them further along the road to enlightenment. The same is true of K itigarbha, but his compassion for those suffering in the hell realms has been immortalized in his famous vow not to attain nirvana until all the hells are empty.[36] In the Chinese context where filial piety and concern for the welfare of the dead are primary values, this Buddhist text became and remains immensely popular. It promotes a set of Buddhist rites to replace popular funerary sacrifices, and as such has addressed the Chinese Buddhists' need to care for the deceased.

ii. Food Bestowal Rituals

The ritual of feeding hungry ghosts is related to both Guanyin and K itigarbha in their work of liberating the inhabitants of the various hells. Though this role is now more closely identified with K itigarbha, the food bestowal ritual is performed during the Great Compassion Repentance Ritual associated with the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin,[37] as well as the Yulanpen Festival[38] during the seventh month.

A Tantric sutra translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra in the 8th century is the

canonical source for the ritual of feeding hungry ghosts (Yü 2001, 325).[39] Today it is known as the Yujia Yankou Shishi Yaoji , or Essentials for the Yoga of Bestowing Food to Feed Hungry Ghosts, formulated in the late 17th century. The original story is that the Buddha's principal attendant Ananda was visited by a hungry ghost who told him that in three days Ananda will die and be reborn as a hungry ghost. Ananda rushes to the Buddha for comfort and is taught the method for feeding hungry ghosts. The method involves the chanting of spells, and the ritually offered food is thought to be transformed into a magical nectar that will turn those who consume it into Buddhas. This practice came to be believed as the most efficacious way of delivering the deceased from hell. Believers perform it during the seventh lunar month not only for their own relatives, but for all sentient beings who may be in need of liberation from the hells. In contrast to the story of Mulian where the chanting of the Buddhist community was considered most efficacious to liberate the hungry ghosts, the method revealed to Ananda privileges the esoteric efficacy of chanting spells (Orzech 1996, 279).

The food bestowal ritual has a version called the Mengshan food bestowal ritual,[40] which was developed by a monk on Mount Meng in western Sichuan during the Song dynasty (960–1279). This ritual is used on different occasions, usually in the afternoon session of day-long Dharma assemblies. It also has a simple and more brief version used daily in the temples.

Averting calamity and repentance texts: Names of the Buddhas, Medicine Buddha Sutra (Yaoshi Jing)

While many texts and services are devoted to praying for the dead, there are also texts and services for the purpose of praying for the living. The chanting of such texts are intended as a penance for any bad karma committed by the living, and have the effect of "annulling disasters," known as xiaozai (Welch 1967, 197).

i. Names of the Buddhas

The Scripture on the Names of the Buddha preached by the Buddha (Foshuo Foming Jing) is attributed to Bodhiruchi, from the early 6th century. The sutra lists the names of 11,093 Buddhas and bodhisattvas and describes their blessings. There are several sutras of this kind, such as the Names of Three Thousand Buddhas Sutra (Foshuo Sanqianfo Gongming Bao Chan), which is the version used in Chinese Buddhism. The Names of Three Thousand Buddhas Sutra was used in a ceremony that gained popularity in China around the 5th or 6th century, in which the names of the Buddhas of past, present, and future were recited to expiate past offenses.[41] As mentioned earlier, the chanting of 3000 names could take as long as ten days in Taiwan, but in the Philippine context only three days are devoted to it, usually to pray for blessings at the end or the beginning of a new lunar year.

There are 88 names of the Buddha that are most common, and these are chanted at regular repentance services especially in the Taiwanese temples like Foguangshan and Zhongtaishan.

ii. Medicine Buddha Sutra

Another text used to confer blessings upon the living, used for birthdays or during the monthly worship days, is the Sutra of the Medicine Buddha. It was translated into Chinese by Xuanzang from the Sanskrit Bhai ajyaguruvaidūryaprabharāja Sūtra (Hsing Yun 2005, 1). Just as Amitābha Buddha presides over the Pure Land in the West, Bhai ajyaguru Buddha, commonly known as the Medicine Buddha, presides over a Pure Land in the East. He vows that when he attains Buddhahood, his body will radiate a light that will illuminate innumerable worlds. In a series of twelve specific vows, he wishes for all sentient beings to share in his qualities, especially good health, abundant resources, happiness, and freedom from all sufferings in the present life. Given the emphasis of these vows on a good life in the present, it can be used at any time, especially to mark special occasions.

Oracle text: The Guanyin Divination Sticks

On the popular level, there is a divination practice associated with Guanyin that is shared across Chinese religions. These are the 100 oracles, quatrains with seven characters in each line, which are used to help believers find an answer to their dilemmas. Palmer and Ramsay (1995) and Karcher (2009) have published brief studies and translations of the oracles. The oracles are dated to the Ming dynasty and have become a fixture in many Chinese temples, including most of the ones I visited in the Philippines.

The brief texts are numbered up to 100, and a cupboard with 100 little drawers contains copies of the texts. An open cylinder with 100 numbered wood or bamboo sticks is set on the altar of Guanyin, and believers follow a standard ritual in bringing their concern before the bodhisattva. The cylinder is then shaken until one stick falls out. The corresponding text is taken from the drawer, and the believer interprets the poetic imagery of the text as Guanyin's guidance for the particular concern. In some temples, there is a lay person proficient in Chinese who will interpret the text for the believer, who may not be skilled in reading and interpreting Classical Chinese.

The monastics I encountered all told me that divination is not a Buddhist practice, but that they all tolerate the practice in their temples, without getting too involved. Many of the devotees who use the sticks have questions regarding their relationships or their livelihoods, and the concerns can be quite mundane. These devotees usually practice popular devotions at the temple and do not attend Dharma assemblies or other activities. But even among the more advanced believers, I found some who said that they generally do not practice divination after learning more about Buddhism, but in desperate situations they may still resort to the divination sticks.

The oracle texts, though not considered part of orthodox practice in the temples I covered during fieldwork, are nevertheless to be found in all of them, and the practice remains popular with visitors to the temples, including tourists. The liturgical texts prevailing in the Philippines indicate a deep devotion to Guanyin, and a great concern for attaining rebirth in the Pure Land. Aside from these two dimensions, shorter texts like spells and Buddha names are chanted to secure the

blessings of the Buddhas and the protection of the bodhisattvas. In this, the liturgies are similar to the practices of other religions, such as the sacraments and sacramentals of Catholicism.[42]

This is not the place for a comparative study of prayer and liturgy as understood and practiced in different religious traditions, but it must be noted that this topic still awaits serious scholarly consideration. In his encyclopedia entry on prayer, Sam Gill defines it as “human communication with divine and spiritual entities,” and uses a schema of prayer as text, as act, and as subject.[43] These different ways of considering prayer can have different characters and intent, e.g., intercession, penitence, benediction, or thanksgiving. Gill notes that where Buddhism is concerned, the chanting of sutras and spells has simply been considered Buddhist forms of prayer which are offered for purposes similar to other religious traditions, but Buddhism being a non-theistic religion, there are significant differences in the nature of human communication with spiritual entities.[44]

Adaptation and identity-formation through textuality

The nature of Buddhist “prayer” is a topic that awaits further study, but for understanding Chinese Buddhism, the study of “worldly benefits” in Japanese religions is particularly insightful. Ian Reader and George Tanabe, Jr. (1998) have articulated a description of Japanese religions as “practically religious” because of the transactional nature of prayer and Japanese people’s focus on this-worldly benefits. Rather than dismiss the “superstitious and magical” aspects of folk religion, Reader and Tanabe affirm its reality, highlight it, and recognize the importance of sincerity as a standard for efficacious prayer.

This approach calls attention to a feature of popular religiosity that is often ignored or, at best, simply taken for granted. People go to great lengths to perform rituals correctly, or to honor promises made to deities, because of the “practical benefits” that have been received in the past or are expected for the future. The pragmatic side of the prayer equation is one of the most important motivating factors in the popular practice of religion. Reader and Tanabe see the dynamic of practical benefits operating in Japanese Buddhism as well, whose temples offer services and various amulets for this purpose. Such practices are then explained as “skillful means” or ways of leading people to higher objectives like renunciation and the pursuit of wisdom (Reader and Tanabe 1998, 12).

In the context of Chinese Buddhism, texts that are chanted for the living also have practical benefits attached to them. For example, chanting the Medicine Buddha Sutra or the Great Compassion Spell is expected to bring anything from good health to a birthday celebrant, healing for the sick, or at least relief of pain for those suffering physical infirmities. When Master Zili was nearing death and was perceived to be in great pain, his disciples took turns staying by his bedside to chant the Great Compassion Spell, and one of them told me that they were not praying for a miraculous healing, but only for the Master to experience less pain in his onward journey.

The benefits gained by chanting texts are not only this-worldly—blessing, protection, relief—but otherworldly as well, which is appropriate, given the great emphasis in Chinese Buddhism on prayers for the dead. These prayers are thought to be efficacious beyond the present world, and the practitioner

simultaneously earns merit for oneself, merits that will bring benefits in a future lifetime.

Nevertheless, the practical sense of the practice is not lost because of the belief that chanting sutras or spells will have a real effect in bringing the deceased to a better place in the cycle of rebirth, or that food bestowal rituals will actually feed numerous hungry ghosts in the lower realms.

The concept of worldly benefits in the popular practice of religion is certainly at play in the lived Buddhism that I have witnessed, and the concept deserves wider application, but religion is just as concerned with benefits to be enjoyed beyond the material world. Starke and Finke (2000, 88), analyzing the organizational aspect of religion, theorized the "micro foundations of religion" as involving both worldly and otherworldly benefits, privileging the latter over the former. These two types of benefits are helpful in understanding the motivations behind the chanting of texts in Chinese Buddhism. Both are benefits that are otherwise unavailable to people and provide the motivation behind spiritual practices such as the chanting of texts.

After examining the way monastics in the Philippines engaged with texts, and what the liturgical texts used in the religious life of the temples were, I can say that Buddhist texts were used as "skillful means" to assist in the devotional life of believers. While most temples do not actively try to teach the content of the texts, some do and have created small groups of believers who study texts rather than just chant them. A few of the monastics are personally devoted to textual study and teaching, but their work seems marginal in the overall picture of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines. The texts are generally utilized for devotional practice, and there is no widespread tradition of Buddhist scholarship as yet.

Nevertheless, the texts are ubiquitous in temple life. Many bookshelves are required to store copies of the different Dharma liturgies used throughout the year, and each temple usually has an area reserved for displaying texts for free distribution. Just as the numerous volumes of the canon are displayed in the temple as encouragement for future study, so are most popular sutras and commentaries made available to any interested party. The mass production of texts is in fact considered a very meritorious activity.

In the last ten years, English texts have increasingly become common as a tool

for reaching out to the younger generation. Some of the sutras distributed for free now feature Romanized Chinese to help the more Westernized Chinese learn how to chant.[45] Such concessions to the younger generation show that texts continue to be a privileged way of propagating Buddhism. The Philippines may not have Buddhist scholars or many study groups, but the texts are part of liturgical life and private spiritual practice. They are available in the temples and await a future time when the conditions are present for deeper study to take place.

In any community where Chinese Buddhism is introduced, adaptations had to be made. We have seen the way liturgical texts were abbreviated, or performed following Christian patterns of temporality. It is apparent that the monastic engagement with texts was in the service of believers' devotional lives. Such were the adaptations that have been put in place for the practice of Chinese Buddhism as a religion in the Philippines.

Aside from adaptation of texts, their use in ordinary religious life also contributed something to the maintenance of a Chinese subethnic identity. In the first instance, monks from South Fujian brought texts and adapted them to the Philippines. Until quite recently, chanting of sutras and spells in the Philippines was done entirely in the Minnan (a.k.a. Hokkien) dialect of South Fujianese migrants and their descendants. This chanting was led by monastics, including the uniquely South Fujianese caigu, described in Chapter 2. The links to Fujian, and later to Taiwan where the local dialect is a variant of Minnan, show that the religious practice of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines is also an expression of Chinese identity, specifically a South Fujianese Chinese identity.

In calling attention to the adaptation of Chinese Buddhist texts to the Philippine context, and highlighting their links to South Fujianese religious practice, what is evident is not only the local adaptation of religion, but also the contribution of religion to the maintenance of a distinct Chinese identity. This theme will emerge again in the following sections.

As noted earlier, the devotion to Guanyin is dominant not only in liturgical texts like the Heart Sutra, the Universal Gate, and the Great Compassion Spell, but also in popular practices like the use of the Guanyin oracle sticks. Recalling too that the earlier Buddhist communities in the Philippines were organized around the devotion to Guanyin, the bodhisattva's role and place in Chinese Buddhism is a point of contact for elite and popular Buddhism. In what follows I will

explore this important aspect of Chinese Buddhism, especially its adaptation and link to Chinese identity in the Chinese Buddhism of the Philippines.

Guanyin in the religious and ethnic discourse

The transformation of the male bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara into the female Guanyin, a process that developed over several centuries in China, is a specific demonstration of the sinification of Buddhism, a process briefly outlined in Chapter 3. In Chun-fang Yü's (2001, 511) comprehensive study of Avalokiteśvara's transformation into a female and Chinese bodhisattva, she describes the process as one of "domestication," a term she borrows from Todd Lewis (1993) and which is broader than the concept of sinification because it is not limited to the creation of a Chinese identity for Guanyin. The idea of domestication includes the changes that made Guanyin appeal to different sectors of Chinese society (Kieschnick 2002, 207).

Yü's study is rich in detail, utilizing Indian, Central Asian, and indigenous Chinese texts, popular literature, fieldwork data, and contemporary scholarship. Among these sources are the Universal Gate and Great Compassion (the spell and the repentance ritual) texts mentioned earlier.

Throughout her book Yü also traces the development of Guanyin's feminization, considering various theories that have been advanced to explain the phenomenon of a female Avalokiteśvara. Doctrinally, as indicated in the Universal Gate text discussed earlier, it was a special characteristic of Avalokiteśvara to be able to manifest in different forms, but the eventual domination of the female Guanyin is a topic that has interested many scholars. Some have argued for a sociological explanation, saying that a female deity dominated because most devotees were women. Others argued for the conflation of Guanyin with indigenous Chinese goddesses.

Ultimately, however, the various theories have not been conclusive. Yü would rather say that "each major form of the feminine Kuan-yin (sic) was originally grounded in one specific location, connected with one life story, and depicted with one type of iconography." (Yü 2001, 447) Yü's book provides the historical details surrounding each of Guanyin's Chinese identities, such as the story of Princess Miaoshan originating in Henan and becoming the Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin, the White-robed Guanyin (Baiyi Guanyin) of Hangzhou, and the South Seas Guanyin (Nanhai Guanyin) of Mount Putuo.[46]

The Chinese-Filipino Guanyin

Of these three major titles of Guanyin, the last has been the most popular in the Philippines. As noted in Chapter 2, the histories, names, and practices of several temples in the Philippines are direct references to the South Seas Guanyin of Mount Putuo, and this is not surprising given the close proximity of Fujian to the mountain. Both are located on the southeastern coast of China. When I visited Mount Putuo in May 2011, I noticed that many, if not most, groups of pilgrims were from South Fujian. The Chinese who brought statues of Guanyin from Mount Putuo to the Philippines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are part of a tradition that is still alive today. The link is then between Mount Putuo and South Fujian, and further between South Fujian and the Philippines and other countries of Southeast Asia.

In considering Guanyin in the Chinese Buddhism of the Philippines, the same two themes that have emerged in our consideration of texts are also in evidence. First, there is the devotion adapted to local conditions, most strikingly in the parallels drawn with the Virgin Mary. Secondly, the image of Guanyin contributed to the assertion of an ethnic and religious identity by serving multiple functions for the sojourning Chinese from South Fujian.

The transformation of Avalokiteśvara into the Chinese Guanyin is a fascinating topic, well-documented and researched by Yü (2001) and others. Field data among the Chinese in the Philippines confirms Guanyin's popularity in the Buddhist communities I visited, not to mention Daoist and popular temples where she is also greatly venerated. The Philippines, being a predominantly Catholic country, however, sets the scene for a unique appropriation of Guanyin. Some of my informants sought to explain Guanyin by saying that she was the "Chinese Virgin Mary." They note that both are maternal and compassionate figures and are therefore "the same" in that they serve the same function of heeding the cries and supplications of their spiritual children. Both are also known to assist those who desire to have children, since both have titles or images where they carry a baby boy. In fact, there is evidence that the image of a Child-giving Guanyin was influenced by depictions of the Madonna of Humility brought to China by Franciscans in the late 13th century (Arnold 1999, 142). By the time the Jesuits started their mission in China in the late 16th century, the

Child-giving Guanyin was already a popular image and many Chinese confused the Madonna and Child paintings that the Jesuits brought with Guanyin (Clarke 2009, 10). It must also be noted that conflating goddesses is not uncommon in Chinese religion.[47]

In religious iconography, Chuanmiao (2008, 85) notes that some images of Guanyin in the Philippines were probably influenced by images of the Virgin Mary, such as the marble Guanyin image at the Fa Tzang Temple in Bacolod City. Quoting the Universal Gate chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he explains the likeness to the Virgin Mary in terms of Guanyin's ability to manifest herself in a way that is accessible to the people. The mutually overlapping iconography, however, has a historical precedent in the late Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), as Lauren Arnold (1999, 143) has demonstrated.

In Buddhist-Christian dialogue, the link between the two female figures has also been explored. Maria Reis-Habito (1993) compares the two figures in terms of their respective scriptural references, histories, and roles in popular piety. So great is the identification of the two that during the Christian persecution in Japan, images of the Virgin Mary were hidden inside images of Kannon (Guanyin in Japanese) so that the Catholics could continue to venerate Mary under the guise of Guanyin (Reis-Habito 1993, 61; Midori 2009). She then came to be known as Maria Kannon.

In the Philippines, the two images have not been merged, as they were in Japan, but it is not uncommon to find a home altar, or a shrine in a folk temple[48] where Guanyin and Mary images stand side by side. The influence of Mary is therefore not only in iconography, but on the level of popular piety. There is also syncretism at play here. In the next section, I will discuss syncretism more thematically as a feature of Chinese religion, but here I can note that the inclusion of Mary in the Chinese Buddhist pantheon, albeit only on the popular level, because of her similarities with Guanyin, is a unique religious adaptation of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines.

Devotion to Guanyin as identity marker

For the first generations of Chinese to migrate to the Philippines from Fujian, Guanyin was a focal point not only for spiritual needs, but also for the preservation of Chinese identity. Communities gathered around her image for private devotions and eventually constructed Buddhist temples. This is attested to in the histories of some temple communities,[49] but it is not far-fetched to think that beyond what oral and textual histories tell us, Chinese people in other parts of Manila and the rest of the country were also gathering around images of Guanyin or other Chinese deities, even if such efforts did not always lead to the establishment of proper temples. The temples not included in my study, those of Daoist or popular origin, enshrine Guanyin, Guandi, and many other deities, and it is not a leap of the imagination to say that such communities were places where Chinese identity was maintained through a common spiritual practice. The devotion to Guanyin is not unique in this regard, but her great popularity allows her to serve more than spiritual purposes. To call her the “Chinese Mary” or the “Buddhist Madonna” is in fact an act of linking a local icon to a properly Chinese devotion. The Chinese did not transfer their devotion to a local spiritual entity with very similar characteristics, but held on to the Chinese deity. Guanyin was and continues to be a link to Chinese identity.

The story of the Fayu Temple in Palawan is a recent example of devotion to Guanyin being the setting for assertion of identity. Palawan is a cluster of islands southwest of the Philippine archipelago. There are hardly any Chinese residing there, but the area is popular for its pristine beaches. At Honda Bay, near the capital city of Puerto Princesa, a new temple was built and lavishly inaugurated in October 2010. The main proponent of the temple is Irene Go, a Chinese woman in her 40s who was born in China but has lived in the Philippines for more than twenty years. She was not particularly religious, but on a visit to Mount Putuo, her interaction with an old monk convinced her that it was Guanyin’s desire to be venerated in the southwest Philippines. Through her interpretation of succeeding events, she discerned that Puerto Princesa was the place desired by Guanyin, and for more than ten years she maintained a makeshift shrine in the city’s outskirts. She became friends with the local mayor in Palawan, and also put up a shrine to Guanyin beside her shop in Manila’s most famous dry goods market. After ten years of establishing relationships and

creating affinities with various people, she was able to purchase land, build the temple, and invite monks from China to come and take charge of the temple. She maintains friendly relations with the existing temples, but has pursued her goal independently.

Interestingly, the devotees who frequent the shrine beside her shop, and who traveled to Palawan for the temple's inauguration, are all new immigrants from China, even though it was wealthy local Chinese who supported her project financially. This, to me, shows how Guanyin is once again the center for the expression of Chinese identity.

The links that have been drawn between Guanyin and the Virgin Mary among Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines demonstrate the readiness of Chinese believers to incorporate foreign elements into their practice of a Chinese religion. In the Chinese Buddhist context of the Philippines, this has been called syncretism, and is not limited to the attitude to Catholic deities like the Virgin Mary. Within Chinese Buddhism, there are also practices that are not considered Buddhist, but nevertheless tolerated, such as the oracle sticks discussed previously. Can this be considered syncretism? What does the term mean anyway? This is the topic of the final section of this chapter.

Syncretism as a dynamic process

Development of the term in Religious Studies

Syncretism sadly has a negative connotation. It is often taken to mean the popular and incoherent fusion of elements from different religious traditions, as against orthodox beliefs and practices (Stewart and Shaw 1994, 1). Since it is an important term in the study of religions and in my consideration of Chinese Buddhism, a brief presentation of the history of the term in religious studies is necessary here.

Michael Pye, writing on syncretism in 1971 and again in 1994, traces the development of the term's use. He begins his 1971 article by referring to a lecture by J.H. Kamstra on the importance of syncretism in the phenomenology of religion, and notes that the term was first used by Plutarch to mean "to come to concord, just as the Cretans do when threatened by a common enemy" (Pye 1971, 83). Theologians of the 17th century began to give it a pejorative meaning, but Kamstra proposed the following definition: "the coexistence of elements foreign to each other within a specific religion, whether or not these elements originate in other religions or for example in social structures." (Ibid.)

Kamstra's definition treats syncretism as a neutral process, and both he and Pye acknowledge G. Van der Leeuw, writing in 1938, as the first to write extensively on the "dynamics of religion," recognizing that religions change all the time, as do the different elements found in different religions (Ibid., 85–86). Kamstra then calls it "syncretism from within" when "elements continue to exist within a religion even though they have really lost their original meanings." (Ibid., 86) Because of this dynamic process in the phenomenology of religion, Pye returns to theology and builds on the notion of the coexistence of elements foreign to each other. Using his fieldwork in Japan on Buddhist-Shinto rites as an example, he describes as "ambiguous" the meanings of various elements under consideration (Ibid., 90), even if there may be a coherent religious pattern. He proposes that all religious traditions have some form of syncretism, defined as "the temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religious and other contexts within a coherent religious pattern." (Ibid., 93) The "ambiguous coexistence" is temporary because the ambiguity works itself toward a resolution, determining the direction taken by syncretism.[50]

Returning to the topic in 1994 after more than twenty years, Pye notes how the term, though used in different ways by anthropologists and theologians, has become an important analytical tool in the study of religions. The term has been "operationalized in order to facilitate the analysis of dynamic religious processes which in fact take place. It is no longer used to imply a reprehensible diminution or jumbling up of religion; in other words, description and analysis replace theological judgment" (Pye 1994, 219).

The positive implication of the development in meaning is that syncretism is no longer viewed as a loose and unthinking "mere mixture" of elements, or as necessarily a synthesis, where a conclusion, usually in the direction of assimilation into the dominant tradition, has been reached. The direction in a syncretistic situation is open-ended. The dynamics of coexistence of diverse elements can be resolved in at least three directions. There is assimilation when the weaker elements are absorbed by the dominant tradition, or there can be dissolution when a separate identity is reasserted because the divergent meanings of disparate elements have been clarified. Finally, a new religion can be created by way of a synthesis. Pye again uses a Buddhist-Shinto example to illustrate his theoretical framework, concluding that "the fascination of a syncretistic situation lies in its still unresolved dynamics" (Ibid., 228).

Accepting that syncretism is a viable analytical tool in the study of religions, further elaborations have been attempted in diverse situations. Leopold and Jensen (2004) have compiled nineteen articles that detail the use of the term in theological and anthropological discourse. Historical and theoretical studies are complemented by the application of the term in different contexts in Africa and the Caribbean. In his contribution, Stewart (2004, 278) defines syncretism similarly to Pye as the "momentary state of mixture between two or more different religions" that can lead in any direction. I have used Pye in this book because his examples from Japanese religion are closer to the Chinese Buddhist phenomena that I have studied.

A special issue of the Asian Journal of Social Science (2009) is devoted to the examination of the utility and adequacy of syncretism as a term for studying everyday religiosity in Asia (Goh 2009a, 5), and contains studies that explore the dynamics of syncretism. For example, there are the assumptions of coherence/symbolic unity or harmonious interaction in a religious system, and the dichotomies between canonical and customary, modern and folk, and great and little. This special issue enriches the discourse on syncretism by applying the

term to diverse ethnographic data. The treatment by Jean DeBernardi of syncretic processes at play in case studies in China and Taiwan was particularly helpful in analyzing my own field data.

In Chinese religion, there have been historical and contemporary attempts to synthesize Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism into a syncretic religion of China. Such was the religion founded by Lin Zhaoen in the 16th century (Berling 1980; Dean 1998), which privileged Confucian values while venerating Confucius, Laozi, and the Buddha on the same altar (Brook 1993b; DeBernardi 2009, 140). In contemporary times, the Red Swastika Society and Yiguandao network worship the founders of great religions while emphasizing Daoist forms of spiritual practice (Ibid.; Soo 1997). It has been pointed out, however, that such efforts were in fact instances of joint worship on the popular level, without the doctrinal synthesis that syncretism implies (Brook 1993b).

As I said in the first chapter, Chinese religion cannot be reduced to the synthesis of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Such neat conceptions fail to account for many aspects of Chinese popular religion. In recent years, there has been greater effort to acknowledge Chinese religion as a category in its own right, although there are many difficulties with identifying the unique element in it because of its syncretic nature. As well, for too long a time, Western scholars chose to focus on elite representations of the three great traditions and dismissed popular religion as superstitious (Wong 2011).

Using syncretism as an analytical tool, it can be demonstrated historically that Buddhism combined early Buddhist beliefs with indigenous Chinese elements and created a synthesis that resulted in the “new religion” of Chinese Buddhism. I briefly described this process in Chapter 3. As a dynamic process, syncretism never ceases to be operative,[51] and varied forms of Buddhism are the result of syncretistic processes. In fact, this is true of other ethnic Buddhisms as well. Donald Swearer (1989), writing about folk Buddhism, provides examples from Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Japan where indigenous beliefs and practices were appropriated into the Buddhist system. This included the continued invocation of local guardian spirits at temples, a practice that finds its parallel in the four protector kings that guard Chinese Buddhist temples (Epstein 2003, 178).[52]

Chinese Buddhism continues to interact with elements from Chinese popular religion. At every time and place, people negotiate the meanings behind their beliefs and practices. This is the process that I have observed in the Chinese

Buddhism of the Philippines. The syncretism of Buddhism with Chinese elements such as the value of filial piety and the transformation of Avalokiteśvara into the female Guanyin led to a unique and coherent fusion of horizons in China.

In the Philippines, the coexistence of Buddhism with Daoism, Chinese popular religion, and the dominant Christianity of the country, exhibits the dynamic of syncretism. Keeping my focus on what I have observed through fieldwork, let me provide three examples of syncretism in Chinese Buddhism, following Pye's (1971, 1994) and DeBernardi's (2009) use of the term.

Examples of symbolic amity and symbolic encompassment

As mentioned earlier, Pye sees syncretism as an open-ended process. In a movement toward a resolution, DeBernardi adds more nuanced possibilities to Pye's assimilation, subordination, and synthesis. Rather than focus on doctrinal issues, she concerns herself with syncretism in space, ritual performance, and imagination. She provides the following description of syncretic fusion or the syncretism process:

When syncretism is an active process, religious practitioners self-consciously join together elements derived from different religious traditions. Where awareness of the multiple sources remains active I regard these as symbolic expression of syncretic amity, and distinguish them from symbolic encompassment, which is the practice of incorporating elements of another religious tradition in a subordinate symbolic role (DeBernardi 2009, 141).

The first example is the "syncretic amity" between Guanyin and the Virgin Mary. When these two images are closely identified or venerated on the same altar, there is no doubt that there is still "awareness of multiple sources." The iconography alone is evidence that the two images come from different traditions, as Guanyin looks thoroughly Chinese or East Asian and Mary's features are those of a sharp-nosed Westerner. When I probed my informants further on the relationship behind the two, they could not say much more than that Guanyin is the Buddhist Mary. Interestingly, I did not hear the reverse description of Mary being the Christian Guanyin, except from the scholar monk Chuanmiao (2008, 85) who suggested that Mary is a "skillful means" manifestation of Guanyin. Among the lay devotees, however, the great similarities in the qualities of Mary and Guanyin were enough to justify their common veneration. That Mary is understood in Chinese Buddhist terms is evidence of Guanyin's role as a focus for Chinese identity, as I have argued earlier.

The second example is the birthday celebration of Śakra, ruler of the Trayastri śa

Heaven in Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmology. In this particular cosmology, there are “innumerable world systems” and humans belong to a “single world system” at the center of which is Mount Sumeru (Kloetzli 1987, 2027). The single world system is further divided into four “continents” in the four directions of the compass, and the human world can be found in the south. Vertically, the system has three realms: desire, form, and non-form. The latter two realms are immaterial, while material beings reside in the realm of desire (Ibid.), which is further subdivided into the commonly known six realms of gods, humans, titans, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell beings.

The gods reside in six hierarchical heavens, and the Trayastri śa Heaven has thirty-three celestial beings ruled by Śakra, believed to be connected to the human realm.[53] Śakra is known in Chinese as Dishitian [54] or Tiangong in popular religion, where Tiangong is conflated with the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang Dadi), who rules over all the gods. Because of this god’s link to the human world, he is the object of thanksgiving and worship. In Buddhism he is seen as a protector of the Dharma, and is depicted requesting the Buddha to share the Dharma with all sentient beings.[55]

Tiangong’s birthday is marked on the ninth day of the Lunar New Year. At Seng Guan Temple, I witnessed this feast being accommodated in the temple. As the Buddhist liturgy of chanting the names of 3,000 Buddhas for the beginning of the year was scheduled on three days including Tiangong’s birthday, the popular feast would be marked in a Buddhist context. Although Tiangong has a Buddhist appropriation as a protector of the Dharma, the ceremonies of that day were focused on the Buddhas. While the chanting of the Buddha names took place in one hall, the temple provided a separate hall and many tables for individuals to use in making their offerings to Tiangong and performing other rituals to cast off evil or transfer them to “others,” represented by small paper cut-outs of human figures. It was also common to see shirts being “blessed” over the incense and then brought home for family members to wear. This particular ritual could be the subject of a specialized study. I mention it only as an example of a Chinese folk religious practice that is accommodated in the major Buddhist temple of Manila.

In this particular case, symbolic encompassment has already taken place. Like the protector gods found at the doors of many Chinese Buddhist temples, Tiangong has been subordinated into the Buddhist system as part of what Pye might call a synthesis in Chinese Buddhism.

The rituals associated with Tiangong are also relevant to the fusion of beliefs with Christianity. One well-read informant who was educated in Christian schools told me that Tiangong is the equivalent of the Christian God (known in Chinese as Tianzhu or Shangdi), and since there are still many heavens and Buddha-lands "above" Tiangong, then the Christian God is actually quite limited, i.e., not the all-powerful Creator that he is made out to be. This interpretation can be traced back to Zhuhong, a Buddhist revivalist who responded to the claims of the Jesuit missionaries in China in the 16th century (Zürcher 2001, 158, 165).

The founder of Fagushan, Master Shengyan, puts the Christian God a few levels up, as ruler of the Great Brahma Heaven in the realm of form (Sheng Yen 2007, 42). These are clearly Buddhist attempts to "contain" the Christian God, and if successful, can resolve the syncretism in favor of symbolic encompassment, but it is doubtful that a critical mass of Buddhist leaders will openly confront Christianity in this way.

The syncretism or fusion of beliefs goes on only in the attitudes of those who wish to justify simultaneous Buddhist and Christian practices. While some Buddhists may try to locate the Christian God in Buddhist cosmology, those who practice both Buddhist and Christian rituals take comfort in being able to worship the "same" God in both traditions. They are happy to see no conflict between the two religions.

The third example is the seventh lunar month, known in Chinese popular religious culture as the "ghost month," and the way it has been appropriated by Chinese Buddhism. This practice is not unique to the Philippines, but is very much in evidence in the country.[56]

Prior to the arrival of Buddhism in China, the seventh lunar month was already the customary time for praying for the dead (Teiser 1986, 47).[57] Just as Buddhism transformed the Chinese mourning period (discussed in Chapter 2), so it also expanded Chinese notions of the afterlife, where food, prayers, and other offerings were regularly presented to the souls of ancestors in the belief that they could impart blessings or curses on their descendants, and added the ideas of karma and rebirth (Welch 1967, 182). The dead now needed not only to be fed, but also to be assisted in their journey toward rebirth, especially if they had been reborn as hungry ghosts. "Buddhist ideas of the afterlife did not displace indigenous ideas but complemented and fused with them." (Ibid.)

Over time, Chinese Buddhism developed many rituals and liturgies to help the ancestors and the hungry ghosts obtain release from their suffering, including the Release of Fiery Mouths (Fang Yankou) and the Water and Earth Repentance Ritual (Shuiliu Fahui) (Welch 1967,185–197). In the story of Mulian saving his mother from hell through chanting and making offerings to the monks (Chen 1964, 282; Teiser 1986, 47–49, 61), and the rituals that have since been associated with this story, the Confucian value of filial piety was expressed in a Buddhist context.

With regard to beliefs about the afterlife and the proper veneration of ancestors, Buddhism interacts with Chinese popular religion, engaging the latter in another instance of symbolic encompassment. Indigenous Chinese beliefs are subordinated to the Chinese Buddhist way of caring for the dead, but in a way that expanded the indigenous beliefs and fed the deep desire among the Chinese people to do right by their dead. This does not mean, however, that there is a clear agreement about the meanings behind the death rituals.

If, as Buddhism teaches, there is karma and rebirth, then why is it that long after a person’s death, families still dutifully register the names of the deceased in the annual chanting assemblies during the seventh lunar month? Spirit tablets are enshrined in temples and their spiritual maintenance through periodic offerings is ensured. If rebirth has taken place for the deceased, then why must prayers and merit-making activities continue for an individual person decades after his death? The practice betrays an attachment to the memory and spiritual well-being of an individual who has a permanent self (i.e., contrary to Buddhist understanding of no-self). One nun told me that this question was valid, and it was why she did not emphasize such practices at her temple. A monk, giving a positive interpretation of all the rituals for the dead, asserted that wherever the deceased may be in sa sāra or the cycles of rebirth in this world, he or she will benefit from the merits earned by his or her family during a particular human rebirth.

There can be differing beliefs and attitudes behind the Chinese Buddhist death rituals, but the symbolic encompassment has been so successful that such questions can be addressed within the Buddhist system. The transformation of Chinese beliefs related to death and the afterlife into Buddhist rituals is an example of both syncretism and the transformation of Buddhism in China.

In the three examples I just presented, the dynamic process behind syncretism is

manifested. There can be syncretic amity, as with the links between Guanyin and the Virgin Mary; or symbolic encompassment, as in the case of Tiangong becoming a protector of the Dharma, and the Buddhist appropriation of the ghost month. Syncretism can therefore apply to a range of phenomena and is not limited to its historical connotation of being a loose and incoherent fusion of diverse religious elements. There are syncretistic processes that define the adaptation of Buddhism in every place and time. In the Philippine case, where the dominant context of Buddhism is Chinese, syncretism is also a feature of Chinese identity simply because it is the Chinese community which visibly engages in its dynamics.

Conclusion

In the last cited example regarding Chinese Buddhist death rituals, the two monastics had differing attitudes to the prevailing Buddhist mortuary practices. One did not wish to perpetuate merit-making rituals for the deceased, even if this resulted in less revenues for the temple. The other was able to interpret the apparent contradictions positively, so that the Buddhist teaching on rebirth is preserved along with the practice of the temple. This indicates that there are multiple ways of integrating different levels of practice.

Interpretation is part of the human condition. The two monastics just mentioned were interpreting Buddhist teaching in the light of popular practices. In analyzing Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, it is important to be aware of the lens with which one sees the phenomenon.

Richard King (1999), among others,[58] has shown how much of Western discourse on the religions of Asia were framed using Christian categories during the colonial era. He has reviewed the scholarship on the concepts of “religion” and “world religions” and shown the extent of Western and Christian bias in them. As a Christian studying Buddhism, I have experienced the need to return to this insight repeatedly, and this is evidence of the deep roots of my Christian presuppositions.

Though I am ethnically Chinese and exposed to the rituals of Chinese religions, my formal religious instruction was in the Catholic faith. Western models of education prevailed throughout all my studies. As I approach Buddhism academically, therefore, my Catholic and Western presuppositions are always operative, and it takes a very conscious effort not to impose these on Buddhist phenomena.

Chinese people who practice popular religion have often told me that Catholicism and Buddhism are very similar or even “the same.” As mentioned earlier, some say that Catholic devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, is just like Buddhist devotion to Guanyin. They have very similar qualities and even resemble each other in iconography.

There is no doubt that these two female objects of devotion inspire similar

emotions and attitudes in their devotees, but studying their historical backgrounds reveals major differences as well. Complex religious traditions have unfolded for both Mary and Guanyin, and these can be taken at face value rather than judged and compared.

Richard King (1999, 39) cites a conversation between the German writer Bichsel and a Balinese Hindu. The German asked the Balinese whether he believed the story of Prince Rama was true. The Balinese answered in the affirmative, but in the course of the conversation, said he was not sure if Prince Rama ever lived, yet the story was true regardless. In contrast, the Balinese observed that Christians consider it important that their God, Jesus Christ, walked the earth, but this belief did not seem to translate into obvious piety and devotion.

For the Balinese believer, the truth of religion is in its capacity to inspire a certain way of living. He perceived the Christian as being too concerned with historical facts, an emphasis that was not obviously important to the non-Christian.

This story illustrates my own tendency to evaluate Buddhism using a Christian framework. This is precisely the insight that has emerged from the acknowledgement of Orientalism, that Westerners or Western-educated people have studied Asia with a set of assumptions which should now be acknowledged and challenged. The religions of Asia must be studied on their own merits, and not evaluated using a Western Christian benchmark. Stephan Feuchtwang makes this point when he says that the assumption of coherence must be set aside in studies of Chinese religion, and ethnography allowed to stand on its own rather than submit to a quest for coherence.[59]

While trying to be self-conscious, therefore, about my personal Christian and Western mindset, I find it helpful to view the religious dimensions of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines in terms of Robert Redfield's (1956) classic characterization of culture as having both Great and Little Traditions. There is abundant evidence of both in the Buddhism of the Philippines. I use the dichotomy of great/little only as a heuristic device to describe my fieldwork.[60] Unlike Redfield who used it to distinguish urban from rural practices of religion, and departing from similar frameworks that come from an elite perspective, I subscribe to the "third stage" of examining Chinese religion (Bell 1989, 39). While the first stage framed Chinese religion in terms of dichotomies between elite and folk, great and little, or urban and rural, the second stage[61]

acknowledged unities that crossed such clean-cut boundaries. The term “popular religion” thus came into use to describe practices that could be observed across social and other divides. In time, “popular religion” as a category was refined further, giving rise to the third stage that describes religious phenomena as “religious cultures.”[62]

Seeing Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines as a religious culture and using the convenient tool of Great/Little traditions, the unique context of the Philippines can be highlighted. Indeed, the phenomenon of textuality is something that cuts across all levels of religious practice and is by no means limited to the monastic or lay elite. The same can be said of the attitude of syncretic amity towards Guanyin and Mary, and the diverse dynamics of syncretism. Practices that are labeled ‘popular’ or ‘folk’ are immediately suspect, but need not be so. A Chinese Buddhist religious culture leaves room for various heuristic devices[63] to be employed without taking narrow positions.

On the side of the Great Tradition of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines are the teachings preserved in the sacred texts of Chinese Buddhism, chanted more than studied in the Philippines, and shared with Chinese Buddhism throughout the world. Included here are the texts and practices that are rooted in the Pure Land and Chan traditions that have developed in China over the centuries, and kept alive in the religious life of Chinese Buddhists everywhere, not least the overseas Chinese communities.

In the Philippines, devotion to Guanyin and the aspiration to be reborn in the Pure Land explains the popularity of related texts and canonical materials. Texts such as the Universal Gate and the Great Compassion Spell are reproduced, explained, and chanted; the name of Amitābha Buddha is never far from the lips of believers; sets of canonical texts rest on many a bookshelf. All this firmly roots Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines in the Great Tradition of Chinese Buddhism.

The difference between lay and monastic Buddhism in the Philippines also follows the same pattern as in Chinese Buddhism. Zürcher (1993, 16), comparing the spread of Buddhism and Christianity in China, observed that against the latter’s strategy of guided propagation from an orthodox center, Buddhism spread through the spontaneous diffusion of monasteries. The Buddhist monastics then became available to local believers for ritual services, and this transformed the local religious culture. In a similar way, there was

already popular Chinese religion in the Philippines before the arrival of Buddhist monastics, but once temples were built and the monastics became available for ritual services, spiritual needs such as prayers for the dead could be undertaken in a Buddhist way. The Buddhist temple then became a privileged setting for the assertion of Chinese and Buddhist identity, a theme that will be developed further in Chapter 6.

The Little Tradition refers to the adaptations of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippine setting. These can point to institutional adaptations, such as the timing and structure of dharma assemblies. Earlier, we observed how chanted texts are abbreviated and the number of chanting days reduced to levels manageable for the devotees. We saw how activities are scheduled during Christian holy days, and how a Buddhist commemoration of a Christian feast of the dead is carried out at a Chinese cemetery. We also noted how Guanyin is viewed vis-à-vis the predominant Catholicism of the country, and different dynamics of syncretism. These are formal adaptations of the Great Tradition of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippine locale.

There are also popular or folk elements in the Little Tradition. Examples of these are the prevalence of divination practices at the temples, especially the use of the Guanyin oracle sticks; funerary rituals like the burning of material objects to accompany the deceased, monetary contributions to register the names of the deceased during chanting; the temple as a venue for key moments in the mourning period observed by families; and the Buddhist observance of generic Chinese religious festivals like the birthday of Tiangong.

What is observable in the Philippines is a stable practice of Chinese Buddhism that is clearly linked to a Great Tradition, but also realistically adapted to the local setting. Existing in a predominantly Christian environment, the Great Tradition is appropriated in Little Traditions that are observed at different levels. Institutional Buddhism followed the Christian pace of life and organized its religious services following Christian timeframes, without moving the observance of Buddhist feast days. The weekend services were set up to give lay people more opportunities for spiritual practice, but the Buddhist feast days continue to be marked, no matter the size of the congregation when these fall on working days, as they often do.

On the popular level, Chinese Filipinos practiced their own Little Tradition of incorporating Catholicism into their Buddhist religious spectrum. Some

informants described themselves to me as “Buddhist Catholics” because they participated in the ritual life of both religions. They did not bother with possible theological inconsistencies and rationalized their practice by saying that both or even all religions are “good” anyway. In Europe and North America, a parallel phenomenon has emerged in the practice of “double belonging,” recently highlighted by Paul Knitter (2009) when he described his Christian practice as heavily influenced by Buddhism.[64] I will return to this idea in the concluding chapter when I consider the nature of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines and the kind of religious identities it engenders.

In any case, the religious practice that develops in every place is a Little Tradition that appropriates for itself certain elements from the Great Tradition. What characterizes contemporary religion is the readiness of people to cross sectarian lines and use beliefs and practices from different traditions, and not necessarily in an undisciplined way. Such is the richness of Chinese religious culture in the Philippines, that the syncretism of Chinese religion can be expanded to include Christian elements. To return to the image of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines as a religious field, it can be described as having many grids where Great and Little Traditions interact.

In this chapter, we have considered the religious dimensions of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, situating the religion within the broader Chinese religious field of the Chinese community. We explored the themes of textuality, devotion to Guanyin, and syncretism as the particular ways in which Chinese Buddhism adapted to the Philippine context and helped the ethnic Chinese to assert a unique Chinese and Buddhist identity in the predominantly Catholic context of the country. The next chapter will focus on the sociocultural dimensions of Chinese Buddhism and its contributions to the formation of Chinese and Buddhist identity in the country.

1 I borrow this metaphor from Judith Berling (1997, 45ff.), who used the “Chinese religious field” as a model for conceptualizing Chinese religious life. She thinks of Chinese religion primarily as a field, where the center holds a common pool of religious elements from which all may draw. Secondarily, the field is a grid in which each community can find a niche. I am using “religious field” in a narrower sense, to describe only the field of Chinese Buddhism among the Chinese in the Philippines. In this field are grids that represent

different levels of practice, and elements incorporated from the neighboring fields of Chinese religion and Catholicism.

2 Singer (1972, 39–52). Singer was studying the development of Hinduism in India and pointed out the limitations of a purely textual approach. He advocated the collaboration between scholars in the humanities who study texts, and social scientists who observe the beliefs and practices of contemporary communities.

3 Other scholars who have written on this dichotomy include Martin Southwold (1983, 6), Talal Asad (1993, 53–54), and M.E. Spiro (1967, 1970).

4 King (1999, 71) refers to Richard Gombrich (1971, 243), where Gombrich says that “belief in personal survival after death is a fundamental feature of Sinhalese Buddhism in practice.”

5 This small but thick volume has been published several times over by Seng Guan Temple. I have a copy of the 1988 edition, colored blue.

6 Shi Huian , Chuji Foxue Keben <Elementary Buddhist Studies Textbook Vols. 1–4> (Manila: Challenge Press, 1952). It was republished into a single volume containing the collected works of Shi Miaoqin (1998). The textbook series has been translated into English and published in bilingual form by the Hwa Tsang Monastery in Homebush, New South Wales, Australia, http://www.htm.org.au/index.php/en/education/publications (last accessed 24 May 2015).

7 Personal interview, 25 April 2011. The recordings were made at a simple

recording studio in his office at Seng Guan Temple, set up for him by his disciples. The recordings have been preserved and converted to digital format, released for private distribution in a series of audio discs. He gifted me with a set of these discs.

8 See the bibliographical entries on Shi Zili for a listing of his transcribed lectures.

9 See Note 6 in Chapter 2.

10 I have mentioned only the most important publications. See Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 54–67) for a complete listing in Chinese of the publications by monastics in the Philippines, including short-lived magazines.

11 As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Zili has two disciples who became nuns, Fajing and Falian, both residing at the Un Siu Temple. In the final years of Zili when he was in ill health, Fajing was effectively running the temple and the prime mover in publishing the works of Zili. I had conversations with both Falian and Fajing during my fieldwork.

12 The assistance that the monks received in publishing their works is often acknowledged in their books, but there are also devotees who prefer to remain anonymous and are not named in the book credits.

13 http://blog.sina.com.cn/chuanchan (last accessed 1 April 2015).

14 The magazine's origins are documented by Shi Chuanmiao (2008, 56), but the magazine became less regular in 2010, when only one issue was published. This became the norm from then on. Daoyuan told me at the end of March 2015 that the magazine is no longer published at fixed times, but he intends to continue with the project as resources allow.

15 Hengzhi is a Chinese Filipino who became a nun while working in the United States. She entered Master Xuanhua's City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, was trained and ordained there, and eventually returned to the Philippines. I had personal conversations with Hengzhi at her temple in Baguio.

16 I observed this at Un Siu Temple, in an area visible to the devotees. Fajing told me (email correspondence, 20 December 2011) that Master Zili secured several versions of the canon for the temple, mostly published in Taiwan. These include the Nihon Daizōkyō (Riben Dazang Jing), the Lung Tripitaka (Long Zang), the Chinese Tripitaka (Zhonghua Dazang Jing), the Wan Tripitaka (Wan Zhengzang Jing) and its supplement known as the Zokuzōkyō (Xuzang Jing), all published by Xinwenfeng in Taipei. At other temples, the canon is displayed in a library or sitting room.

17 Foguangshan liturgy book used in Cebu, Bacolod, and Iloilo; Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas Daily Recitation Handbook (Talmage, California, Dharma Realm Buddhist University, 1989); The Buddhist Liturgy (New York, Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada, 1993).

18 See the Section F below for a description of this text. A version of this sutra known as the Names of Three Thousand Buddhas lists 1000 Buddhas each for past, present, and future. Information from http://www.sgilibrary.org/search_dict.php?id=232 (last accessed 1 April 2015). See also the Chinese Buddhist canon in Taishō 440, the Foshuo Foming Jing , also available at http://www.cbeta.org/result/T14/T14n0440.htm (last accessed 1 April 2015).

19 During a reign of more than forty years during the end of the Six Dynasties period (220-589), Emperor Wu of Liang (r. 502-549) embraced Buddhism and was involved in the creation of two liturgical texts, both concerned with liberating hungry ghosts. These are the Liberation Rite of Water and Land, and the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance. The latter was occasioned by the early death of his wife, after which she appeared to him in a vision and narrated that she had been reborn as a snake in the lower realms, thus needing the prayers of the sangha to liberate her. Emperor Liang asked a team of monks led by the Chan Master Baozhi to write ten chapters of the repentance, and the wife is believed to have been liberated after the repentance was performed. The repentance text has since become very popular in praying for the dead during the seventh lunar month. Tsai-Hsia Hong (2007) wrote a doctoral dissertation on the Liberation Rite of Water and Land and the Great Compassion Repentance Ritual, and devotes a few pages to the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance (Hong 2007, 59–63).

20 I witnessed this myself during fieldwork.

21 I witnessed the one organized in November 2010 at the Chong Hoc Temple in the Manila Chinese Cemetery.

22 For example, the Ocean Sky Chan Monastery and the Foguangshan Mabuhay Temple have a Saturday evening assembly, and Seng Guan Temple has one on Sunday morning.

23 See Edward Conze (1978) for a detailed study of Prajñāpāramitā literature.

24 The work has been translated into Chinese six times, of which three have survived. The earliest translation was by Dharmaraksa, in 286 CE (Yü 2001, 37). Because of the different recensions of the Lotus Sutra, chapter numbers vary. The 12th chapter (Devadatta) was not in Kumarajiva's translation but is in the current version seen as "canonical." See Yang Zengwen. 2000. "Saddharmapundarīkāsūtra in Chinese History and Its Significance in the 21st Century." Journal of Oriental Philosophy 10: 20–30.

25 Among many studies and commentaries of this text, see the first text published by Xingyun in 1953 (English translation 2011), founder of Foguangshan. This text is said to have established his reputation as a teacher. There are two commentaries produced in the Philippines: Shi Chuanfa (2009) for a commentary translated into English by a Chinese-Filipino Buddhist nun, and Shi Zili (2006a) for a text in Chinese.

26 See Chappell (1977; 1986) for Chinese interpretations of the Pure Land; Tanaka (1990) on the Chinese Pure Land doctrines; and Getz (1999) on the creation of a Pure Land patriarchate. For the syncretism of Pure Land and Chan, see Sharf (2002b), Shih (1992), and Stevenson (1996).

27 Another translation of the name is "Buddha of Immeasurable Life" (Wuliangshou Fo), and the text, (Wuliangshou Jing).

28 Yü (2001) devotes an entire chapter to this topic.

29 Chi Chen Ho (2010) devoted his doctoral dissertation to this spell, covering the period from the Tang dynasty to contemporary times. He demonstrates how the spell has been used independently of the sutra from which it came, and how it has been interpreted and used throughout history.

30 Welch (1967, 202-03) mentions the common practice of keeping spirit tablets at temples in China, and I have seen such ancestral halls at Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xiamen (formerly Amoy), and London. Cochini (2009, 500) in a modern guide to 157 temples in China, mentions the hall of patriarchs or ancestral hall as one of the common secondary halls in Chinese Buddhist temples. It would honor the temple's founders, and beside it would be a hall for the spirit tablets of the temple's devotees (if this service is offered by the temple). The practice indicates the centrality for Chinese Buddhists of filial piety as a value expressed in death rituals, and the adaptation of Buddhism to Chinese culture.

31 In Chinese popular religion, the seventh lunar month is believed to be the time when "hungry ghosts" roam the earth in search for food. These "ghosts" are either ancestors who have come to visit the earth, or troubled souls in need of nourishment from the living. The festival was given a Buddhist meaning in the Yulanpen Sutra, where the Buddha teaches Maudgalyāyana (Mulian in Chinese) how to obtain liberation for his mother, who had been reborn in a lower realm. The Yulanpen Festival is also celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. For a study of the Yulanpen festival, including the inconclusive evidence about the origins of the term "Yulanpen" (sometimes equated with "Ullambana"), see the first chapter of Teiser (1986), The Ghost Festival in Medieval China. Later in this chapter, the section on syncretism also discusses the practice of this festival in the Philippines.

32 For an in-depth study, see Zhiru (2007), who studied the development of the Dizang cult in medieval China, including pre-10th-century texts that referred to Dizang and the accretions that culminated in the 10th-century sutra.

33 See Teiser (1994), The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, for a study of the Chinese Buddhist bureaucratic system governing rebirth.

34 For a study of filial piety in the Buddhist context, see Cole (1998), Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism.

35 As mentioned in Note 31, the story of K itigarbha's past life as a filial daughter is derived from that of Mulian (Maudgalyāyana), a monk-disciple of the Buddha who saves his mother from her tribulations in hell. See Teiser (1988) for a book-length study.

36 Zhiru (2007) notes that the K itigarbha sutra does not formulate the vow in this way, but popular belief puts this formulation in the mouth of K itigarbha.

37 Yü (2001, 320ff.) discusses the food bestowal ritual in the context of the identification of the filial daughter Miaoshan with Guanyin, and her prominent role in the ritual.

38 See Note 31.

39 Orzech (1996) provides an English translation of The Buddha's Discourse on the Scripture of the Spell for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost and also provides a brief history of texts used to liberate the hungry ghosts. Hun Lye (2003) did his doctoral dissertation on the history, practice, and contemporary contexts of this rite.

40 Wu Jiang (2002) has an unpublished paper that details the transmission of the Mengshan ritual in late imperial China.

41 Information from http://www.sgilibrary.org/search_dict.php?id=232, Taishō 440 http://www.cbeta.org/result/T14/T14n0440.htm, and http://www.btrts.org.sg/three-thousand-buddhas-sutra (last accessed 1 April 2015). See also Zürcher (2006, 110) where he makes a general reference to these litanies of Buddha names in the context of repentance services.

42 There are seven Catholic sacraments to mark the most significant life transitions like birth and marriage, and to foster union with God, both for the living and the dead. Sacramentals refer to any other instruments, images, or symbols that help people in their spiritual life, especially in praying for specific intentions like protection or healing. For a detailed exposition, see Part 2 the Catechism of the Catholic Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

43 Encyclopedia of Religion Second Edition, edited by Lindsay Jones (Detroit, Michigan: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, 7367–72). In his entry on prayer, Gill also reviews classic studies on prayer such as E.B. Tylor's Primitive Culture (1873), where Tylor attributed a psychological and spiritual character to prayer; and Friedrich Heiler's Prayer, A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion (1932).

44 Ibid., p. 7369.

45 See, for example, the Daily Recitation Handbook used at the Sagely City of 10,000 Buddhas in Los Angeles, translated by the Buddhist Text Translation Society, Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, which is the Order founded by Master Xuanhua. The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation in Taiwan prints liturgy books with Romanized Chinese for free distribution, and the Holy Buddhist Temple in Manila uses them for devotees who cannot read Chinese. The Foguangshan liturgy book also includes Romanized Chinese.

46 Aside from Yü's (2001) detailing of all these titles of Guanyin, see also the reviews of Yü's book by Daniel Overmyer (2002) and John Kieschnick (2002) for further elaborations on the development of the Guanyin cult in China. Prior to the publication of Yü's book, the standard English text on the legend of Miaoshan was by Glen Dudbridge (1978). On the White-robed Guanyin associated with the gift of sons, Overmyer refers to a Master's thesis by one of his students, Ling-in Lilian Chuu (2001).

47 For examples from folk Chinese Buddhism, see Overmyer (1976, 130–44).

48 I observed the practice of honoring Guanyin and Mary on the same altar in my own family's home, and in many others. The Chong Hock Temple inside the Chinese Cemetery and the Daoist Santo Singkong Temple, both in Manila, feature Mary together with Guanyin and other Chinese deities.

49 See the profiles of Un Siu, Wan Tong, and Holy Buddhist Temples in Chapter 2.

50 Berling (1980, 9) defines syncretism as a process of selection and reconciliation, highlighting the fact that Chinese religions haven been unfairly described as randomly syncretic.

51 For some classic studies on syncretism in the gradual development of Chinese Buddhism, see Kenneth Chen's (1973) study on the Chinese transformation of Buddhism, Sharf (2002a, 2002b) on Chinese Buddhism, especially the syncretism of Chan and Pure Land practices, and Sheng Yen (2007), who answers common questions on orthodox Chinese Buddhism.

Jungnok Park (2012) focuses on the idea of a soul in Chinese Buddhism, demonstrating how translators of Buddhist texts adapted their work to the Chinese audience.

52 The four kings are associated with each of the cardinal directions, and occupy the lowest of the six desire heavens. They are known in Chinese as the Sitian Wang , and are described in the K itigarbha Sutra. Their statues can be found right after the main entrance of bigger Buddhist temples in China. Temples in the Philippines generally do not have space for their statues, except in miniature form, as in the Hwat Kong Temple.

53 Descriptions of Śakra can be found in the K itigarbha Sutra and the Śūra gama Sūtra. See also the entry on the “Six Desire Heavens” in Epstein’s (2003) Buddhism A to Z.

54 See the entry on Dishitian in the Foguang Dictionary (Shi Xingyun 1988, 3776).

55 For an example of this kind of artwork, and the Chinese Buddhist names of gods appropriated from Vedic religion, see http://jadeturtlerecords.blogspot.co.uk/2011/02/sakra.html (last accessed 24 May 2015).

56 In his doctoral thesis, Ingmar Heise has shown how the ghost festival has been transformed into a dharma assembly. The thesis is forthcoming from Bristol University, but a summary has already been published (Heise 2012).

57 There are Daoist liturgies for this purpose as well. Pang (1987) describes

the Daoist celebration of this festival in Honolulu. Teiser (1986) goes beyond sectarian lines and sees the Yulanpen Festival as a mortuary ritual that marks the passage from death to rebirth.

58 See also Fabian (1983), Asad (1993), and McCutcheon (1997) for general discourses on the anthropology of religion. Southwold (1983) focuses on Sinhalese Buddhism as a case study of the anthropological approach to religion where text and context must be considered together. Paper (1994, 24) critiques the imposition of Christian categories on the study of Chinese religions and underlines, echoing Watson (1988, 4), the primacy of performance over belief and the offering of food as a common denominator in Chinese religions.

59 Feuchtwang (2010) presents his theories of religion, charisma, and ghosts after a long career studying Chinese religion. The call to constant openness to what is revealed during research was also made by Jonathan Smith (1978) when he said that maps are not equivalent to the territories they cover, and there is always the danger of being attached to one's maps. To highlight the constant flux in territories, Sam Gill (1998) suggests journey or story as more dynamic metaphors for the study of religion. Smith (1978) and Fitzgerald (1997) also detail the difficulty of defining religion, even as they affirm its necessity as an analytical concept. Talking about Chinese Studies more generally, Miranda Brown (2006) points out the inadequacy of psychic unity and essentialism as ways of thinking about East-West differences. All these studies share the key insight of taking any religious phenomena on its own terms rather than forcing the phenomena into preconceived categories.

60 Similarly, although they were dealing with predominantly Buddhist societies, Obeyesekere (1963) and Kirsch (1977) study Sinhalese and Thai Buddhism, respectively, as complex realities with "Great" and "Little" dimensions. Their studies are also cited by Swearer (1989) as examples of folk Buddhism.

61 Jochim (1988) writes about the unities in defining the poles of Chinese religion and can be located in this second stage.

62 Catherine Bell (1989) takes her discussion of the three stages from the earlier work of Natalie Davis, “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion,” in The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 307–36.

63 David Faure (1987, 353), examining space and place in Chinese religious traditions, warns against the perils of disregarding earlier paradigms—“The ‘great versus little traditions’ paradigm, as used here, does not then refer to a real opposition between two juridically or socially distinct parties but, rather, to different perceptions, different and unequal uses of the same space.”

64 See also Rose Drew’s (2011) exploration of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging.

CHAPTER 5

Planting Good Roots, Creating Affinities, and Practicing Compassion

Sociocultural Dimensions

Places of worship seldom limit themselves to religious activities. As we saw in Chapter 2, the temple communities did not confine themselves to rituals and devotions. Over time, the founders of the temple communities saw the need for activities that would complement the religious dimension of temple life.

Seven basic education schools in the Philippines provide Chinese education along Buddhist principles. Informal education by way of "Sunday School" classes and summer camps conducted in Chinese are organized in at least three temple communities. Talks and other activities conducted in English are a growing phenomenon, especially in the temples run by Buddhist orders from Taiwan.

Publications and, to a lesser extent, audiovisual materials are produced by lay devotees and freely distributed at the temples. In the public sphere, there is an effort by two Buddhist communities, Foguangshan and Miao De Chan, to spread Buddhist culture by celebrating the Buddha's birthday at shopping malls.[1]

Widespread poverty in the Philippines has not escaped the attention of Buddhist temple communities. Long before Tzu Chi started operating in the Philippines, Buddhist charity clinics were already serving various communities. There are eight such clinics or centers still existing.

Continuing the focus on the themes of Chinese identity and Buddhist adaptation, this chapter will locate the sociocultural activities of Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines in the wider context of the Chinese diaspora and Chinese Buddhist charitable work. After a brief introduction to overseas Chinese voluntary organizations, I will explore the role of Chinese education in the formation and preservation of overseas Chinese identity, including the added layer of Buddhist identity. I will also discuss the efforts expended on informal education.

Secondly, I will locate Buddhist charitable work in the historical context of

charitable associations in Chinese history and in the Chinese diaspora, and then explore the move toward Humanistic Buddhism in contemporary Chinese Buddhism.

Finally, returning to the fieldwork data, I will analyze my informants' comments about the rationale of Buddhist charitable work.

Overseas Chinese organizations

Chinese organizations are very common in overseas Chinese communities. Especially where the Chinese form a minority community in a country, organizations exist to represent their interests. In the Philippines, the earliest such organizations were formed during the late Spanish colonial era, such as the Gremios de Chino or Chinese guilds that represented specific trades. By 1870, the guilds had evolved into the Communidad de Chino (Chinese Community) and were headed by a Capitan Chino (Captain) or Gobernadorcillo (Little Governor) (See 1988, 320; Wilson 1998, 138). This organization was an instrument of control by the Spanish and a representative unit for the Chinese. The group began managing a Chinese hospital and cemetery[2] and was instrumental in founding the Anglo-Chinese School. The elite group of merchants continued representing the Chinese community into the American period. The Manila Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1904 and its present-day equivalent continues to be a strong voice for the ethnic Chinese community in the Philippines (See 1988, 320).

After the Second World War, Chinese organizations began to proliferate to a degree never seen before. Closely linked surname and hometown associations, trade associations, sworn brotherhoods, political groups, cultural associations, alumni associations, temple communities, and schools were formed in all the major cities of the Philippines. The chambers of commerce throughout the country were allied and the resulting federation became the voice of the Chinese community.[3]

Writing in 1998, Wickberg (1998, 174) gave the estimate of 1,000 organizations serving a population of one million ethnic Chinese in the Philippines. These organizations serve a variety of functions, summarized into four: a) member welfare, b) negotiation and protection, c) cultural expression and retention, and d) business/personal networking and status making (Ibid., 186). Needless to say, all these organizations had predominantly Chinese members and were therefore centers of Chinese ethnic identity.[4] Wickberg says that “[c]ultural expression and retention is part of every kind of Chinese-style organization’s activities” (Ibid., 187).

These organizations have survived the integration of the ethnic Chinese into mainstream Philippine society by shifting the emphasis of their functions. For example, the need for member welfare was strongly felt by the first generation of immigrants, but as they and their families settled into the country, networking rather than economic aid became the prevailing need (Ibid., 188).

Among all the types of Chinese organizations, one had pride of place as the place where Chinese heritage could be passed on to future generations, and new associations formed: the school. The Chinese school, adapted to local conditions, is a common feature of overseas Chinese communities, and is a primary means of maintaining Chinese identity (Wang G.W. 2008, 122). The efficacy of the school setting was not lost on the Buddhists for propagating both Chinese and Buddhist identity.

Chinese Buddhist identity through education

Cultural role of Chinese schools among the overseas Chinese

“In overseas Chinese communities, the major non-familial institution of ethnic maintenance since 1900 has been the Chinese school.” (Wickberg 2010, 137)

Compared to other types of Chinese organizations in the Philippines, the Chinese school was a key environment where Chineseness was preserved primarily through the teaching of a Chinese language, and secondarily through supplemental cultural activities. Most of the schools established before the Second World War were community projects, especially of local chambers of commerce (See 1988, 320). Many of these schools still exist today and are considered “non-sectarian” as against the schools opened by religious bodies (Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist) after the war.

The Chinese language curriculum of these schools, especially content, teaching method, and effectiveness, is a subject of much debate. Asian geopolitics also had their influence as China and Taiwan competed for influence in the Chinese schools. Academic leaders had and still have to make choices between teaching Hokkien or Mandarin, using the Taiwanese phonetic system or the mainland Chinese Pinyin system, and developing local textbooks or importing them from abroad, just to name some of the more pressing issues. These are all important considerations, but they all proceed from a desire to preserve Chinese cultural heritage for younger generations of Chinese Filipinos.[5]

Most ethnic Chinese in the Philippines still send their children to Chinese schools because these schools generally have high academic standards and offer Chinese-language instruction. The schools, numbering at least 170 with approximately 80,000 students, are natural places for socialization with fellow ethnic Chinese. It is no surprise, then, that Buddhist schools were established soon after the construction of Buddhist temples, especially in Manila.

As with Chinese schools, the seven Buddhist schools are all relatively small. Most have a student population between 100 and 250, translating into one class for every level of instruction. The biggest Buddhist school is the Philippine Academy of Sakya, with 600 students or two classes per level of instruction. In considering these numbers, it must be noted that in every city, there are always several Chinese schools. Further, the ones run by Christian or civic Chinese

organizations get the highest numbers of students.[6]

All the leaders of the Buddhist schools told me that their population used to be predominantly Chinese, but the Chinese mestizo[7] and non-Chinese population has been steadily growing. This makes it more difficult to maintain a Chinese environment in the school. Nonetheless, the Buddhist schools are still Chinese in character, and for the mestizos are an instrument for their resinification (See 1988, 326). In having a Chinese-language program consisting of daily classes of one to two periods, and supplementary cultural activities, the Buddhist schools are no different from other Chinese schools. It is in their study of Buddhism, and other Buddhist activities, that they are unique.

Assessing Buddhist identity in Chinese Buddhist schools

Just as Christian schools include religious instruction as a regular subject in their curriculum, the Chinese Buddhist schools I visited also devoted class time to Buddhist instruction. In a Christian country like the Philippines, however, the majority of students in Buddhist schools are Christians in their formal religious affiliation, yet are subjected to classes on Buddhism. The school authorities were unanimous in saying that it is not their objective to convert their students. They only want to share Buddhist teachings, and attending the class is considered a reasonable demand for those who choose to study in a Buddhist school.

All seven Buddhist schools have a religion class only once a week, lasting from forty to sixty minutes. All are taught by monastics from their attached temples, using a mix of English and Chinese as the medium of instruction. The only exception is Cebu's Samantabhadra Institute, where no monastic is available to teach and one of the school's past students has taken on the role of handling the classes.

The Philippine Academy of Sakya and the Philippine Shing Guan Memorial Institute use a complete set of textbooks prepared by their founders, Miaoqin and Yinshun.[8] The other schools adapt their instruction using various sources. As would be expected, the curriculum includes basic Buddhist teachings and many stories about the Buddha and Guanyin.

Aside from formal classes in Buddhism, there are other activities that express the school's Buddhist identity. Brief chants, usually including a text on taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, are offered before school assemblies or graduation ceremonies. Some schools have daily devotions to begin the morning and afternoon sessions.[9] I observed that the Heart Sutra was mentioned by most of my informants as a commonly chanted text, favored because it is short and contains key Buddhist teachings.

Occasionally, students are brought in groups to the neighboring temple for a dharma assembly lasting half an hour to give them the experience of doing prostrations, chanting, and circumambulation. At the Philippine Shing Guan Memorial Institute, the graduating class is given the option of participating in a formal ceremony of taking refuge, and each year between twenty and thirty do

so.[10] These students then become Buddhists by choice, and often continue volunteering at school or temple activities.

During the summer months, most of the schools organize camps lasting from one to four weeks. These are Chinese culture camps, but include visits to temples and some chanting activities.

The seven schools I visited have a clear Buddhist identity. They are located beside or near temples, were founded by Buddhists, and have organized religious instruction as well as spiritual activities such as prayers and dharma assemblies. These are basic elements that can be found in any religious school. Compared to Christian schools[11] in the Philippines where religious instruction is done at least three times a week, the weekly class at Buddhist schools seems minimal, but this is due to the lack of people, especially monastics, who can teach the classes.

The impression I got after visiting the seven schools is that Buddhist identity, while omnipresent in each school, was not being highlighted aggressively or separately from Chinese identity. This supports the image of contemporary Chinese Buddhism not being a proselytizing religion. People are always welcome to come and take part, but there is no pressure to count conversions. In a Chinese Buddhist school, Chinese culture and Buddhism go together in both implicit and explicit ways. In contrast, Chinese Christian schools require deliberate efforts to link Christianity with Chinese culture.

Buddhist educational structures in the Philippines followed the model of established sectarian schools that were mostly Christian, and in this way adopted an existing model for its own educational institutions. Though the schools do not aim to convert their students from their original religion (usually Christian), the schools see their work as one of “planting good roots (luo shangen)” and “creating affinities (jieyuan),” expressions that I heard time and again to describe the educational and cultural work of Buddhists.

In the next section I will detail the efforts of Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines to run schools, and provide profiles of the seven schools that are in operation today.

Profiles of schools

Samantabhadra Institute in Manila, founded as a primary school in 1947, is the country's oldest Buddhist school. One of the institute's first teachers, Gao Wenxian , also opened Chu Un School (Ci'en Xuexiao) in 1949, but this school lasted only three years.

The seven primary and secondary schools introduced here are all recognized by the Philippine government and follow the approved government curriculum in English and Filipino. On top of this, the schools add daily classes in Chinese language, most of them for more than two periods each day. This is the traditional structure of Chinese schools in the Philippines. All the schools are coeducational and offer a weekly class in religion, i.e., Chinese Buddhism.

The Miao De Buddhist Institute (Miaode Foxueyuan) located within the Miao De Chan Temple in Tagaytay City envisioned itself as the first Buddhist Institute in the Philippines, but no formal classes or degree programs are offered there. It is busy only during the summer months of April and May, when the students supported by the temple's scholarship fund come for a residential summer camp.

In 2014, the Foguangshan Mabuhay Temple in Manila secured government approval to start the Guangming College at their premises, offering undergraduate degrees in Buddhist Studies and Performing Arts.

1. Philippine Academy of Sakya (Nengren Zhongxue)

Contact and Basic Information

1463 Masangkay Street, Sta. Cruz, Manila

Tel. 02 2527350; 2527602

Website: http://www.ph-sakya.com/

Students: approximately 600

Levels: kindergarten to secondary school

History

In 1959, the eminent monks Yinshun , Xingyuan , Ruijin , and Miaoqin envisioned the need for a new Buddhist school in Manila. At that time, Yinshun was the joint abbot of the Seng Guan and Hwa Chong temples. The task of organizing the school was assigned to Miaoqin, who began school operations the following year, 1960, with support from the temple devotees.

The school started by offering the lower primary levels and initially used the refectory of Seng Guan Temple as a classroom. In 1961, an old structure on Benavidez Street was bought, and the school operated there for almost twenty years, adding more wooden structures as the school population grew. The school's present site on Masangkay Street, near the Bambang Market, was purchased in 1968, but there were no funds available for the construction of new buildings. Better economic conditions were in place by 1980, and construction on what would become a seven-storey school building began. The school moved to the new site in 1982.

Although Yinshun was given the title of founding Principal, it was Miaoqin who

personally supervised all aspects of the school's founding years. He served at the school from 1959 until his death in 1976.

A lay person, Dong Yunqing , took over as Principal of the school when Miaoqin died. Ruijin also asked the caigu Chongcheng (b. 1939, a.k.a. Ms. Maria Say Kian Giap), disciple of Miaoqin, who was in her fourth year of Buddhist studies in Taiwan, to return to Manila and serve as the Assistant Principal. She took over as Principal in 1982, when Dong Yunqing retired upon the completion of the move to the new campus.

The school celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2010. In 2011, Chongcheng retired as Principal and became the School Director. The new Principal is Dr. Divina Gracia Gaspar (Xu Puhua) who was a boarder at Hai En Temple in her youth. The only nun at Hai En Temple, Zongdao , is in charge of discipline and head of the Chinese department.

Buddhist Activities

Short, daily Buddhist chants to begin and end classes

Twice-a-week school assembly devotions

Weekly class in Buddhism, using textbooks authored by the founders, Miaoqin and Yinshun

Occasional chanting sessions and visits to Seng Guan Temple

Charitable activities to express Buddhist compassion

2. Philippine Buddhacare Academy (Fojiao Puji Xueyuan)

Contact and Basic Information

10–12 Don Pepe corner Maria Clara Streets, Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City

Tel. 02 7113915; 7317074

Website: https://peacefullife1000.wordpress.com/about/

Students: approximately 200

Levels: kindergarten to secondary school

History

The school opened in 1997, twenty years after the Thousand Buddha Temple, located across the street, opened in 1977. The temple and school have the same founder in the person of Master Guangchun , who felt that a good Chinese education is necessary for the proper understanding of Buddhism. His Dharma sister, Guangxue , and lay devotees assisted him in the establishment of the school.

From 1998 to 2015, the school was run by Mrs. Elizabeth Co (Cai Lisha), who earned her undergraduate degree in education from the Philippine Normal University, and her masters in educational administration from the University of the Philippines. She reported to a Board of Trustees and the monastics who served as directors of the school.

Due to declining enrolment and perennial flooding in the area, the school closed in March 2015, but the facilities continue to be used for vocational courses under the name “Buddha Education Center.” The center took in their first batch of twenty-three students from Leyte (survivors of Typhoon Yolanda) for an eight-

month course from September 2014 to April 2015. Aside from practical courses in sewing, computer literacy, and massage, the program also includes classes on Chinese language and culture.

Buddhist Activities

Short, daily Buddhist chants to begin and end classes

Weekly class in Buddhism, ranging from 35 to 50 minutes

Occasional chanting sessions or visits to the temple

Charitable activities to express Buddhist compassion

3. Philippine Samantabhadra Institute (Felübin Puxian Zhongxue)

Contact and Basic Information

1141–45 Batangas corner J. Abad Santos Street, Tondo, Manila

Tel. 02 2530338; 2521609

Students: approximately 120

Levels: primary and secondary school

History

The school traces its beginnings to 1947, when a group of fifteen Chinese community leaders, including Liu Meisheng (a.k.a. William Correa, the future Juesheng , ordained in 1984) worked with Xingyuan to start a new school. It opened on rented property along Juan Luna Street with 370 students, and Xingyuan immediately formed a board of trustees to manage the school.

By 1949, the student population had grown to almost five hundred, and a bigger property was needed. This was found only in 1956, when the present site on Batangas Street was purchased. The school moved to its new site in 1957. Until then it was only a primary school.

In 1959, responding to the parents' request to open a high school department, the board of trustees led by Cai Wenhua erected another building on Batangas Street, secured the necessary government permits, and this became the Manjusri High School (Wenshu Zhongxue).

For a few years, the primary and secondary schools operated independently of each other due to different government licenses, but the two merged in 1961 and became one institution under the name of Samantabhadra Institute. Different

individuals served as Principal, but the longest-serving was Liu, who served continuously from 1947 to 1959, and from 1972 to his death in 1993.

From 1993 until the present, Liu's younger sister Liu Lansheng and her family have been managing the school. The latter's daughters Pauline and Louisiana, despite migrating to the United States, help keep the school running to honor the memory of Liu Meisheng. They introduced computer education and other improvements to the school, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2007.

In 1958, Liu Meisheng was also responsible for inviting the monks Zili and Weici to teach Buddhism at the Samantabhadra Institutes in Manila and Cebu, respectively. Many of the two monks' students later became practicing Buddhists, i.e., as against folk religion, and provided leadership in temple communities.

Buddhist Activities

Short, daily Buddhist chants to begin and end classes, with emphasis on the vows of bodhisattva Samantabhadra

Weekly class in Buddhism for all levels

4. Philippine Buddhist Shing Guan Memorial Institute (Feilübin Chengyuan Jinian Xueyuan)

Contact and Basic Information

Northern Polytech, University Hills Subdivision

Potrero, Malabon City

Tel. 02 3614248; 3612310

Students: approximately 200

Levels: primary and secondary school

History

The school began as a small preschool to honor the memory of Hwa Chong Temple's founder, Xingyuan (a.k.a. Shing Guan). Founded by Miaojue , the preschool opened in 1972 using a room in the temple premises. There were only twenty-one students in the beginning, but the numbers grew and more rooms in the temple were used for educational purposes. The kindergarten and primary levels were started, and formal government recognition was secured by 1980.

In 1992, two buildings were erected behind the temple complex and the school began to have its own campus, distinct from the temple. The secondary school was opened in 2002, and produced its first graduates in 2006.

Miaojue served as the School Director from 1972 to 1990. Upon his death, his disciple Zhenyi became the School Director. Since its foundation in 1972, there have been five lay Principals in the school.

Buddhist Activities

Short, daily Buddhist chants to begin and end classes

Chanting session four times a year, before quarterly examinations

Weekly class in Buddhism for all levels

Option to “take refuge” before graduation

5. Samantabhadra Institute (Cebu) (Puxian Zhongxue)

Contact and Basic Information

Banilad Street, Cebu City

Tel. 032 2326794; 2326797

Students: approximately 150

Levels: primary and secondary school

History

When Liu Meisheng (see entry on Philippine Samantabhadra Institute) visited Cebu in 1955 to listen to a lecture by Yinshun, he saw the need for a Buddhist school there and decided to establish a branch of the Samantabhadra Institute in Manila. He borrowed facilities from the University of the Visayas for the first year, and then rented an old school building on Borromeo Street.

The present site on Banilad Street was purchased in 1957, with half of the funds raised locally and the other half donated by the Samantabhadra Institute's (Manila) board of trustees. Weici arrived in 1958 to teach the Buddhist classes at the school, and Yinshun visited again in 1959, in time to preside over the groundbreaking ceremonies for the new campus. The board of trustees was formed in 1963 and set about to complete construction of the new school buildings. The school moved to Banilad Street in 1965.

After Liu Meisheng's initial term as Principal, the school had a series of lay Principals, each one serving only one or two years. In 1968, the board decided that it would be better to have a monk serving as Principal, and installed Weici in this position.

As Principal, Weici built a dormitory in order to accept student boarders, a swimming pool, and more school facilities. The school earned a good reputation in the city during this time.

In 1980, Weici decided to relinquish the position of Principal in order to concentrate on the Phu Shian Temple, where he was the abbot. The temple had just moved to a new location. For the next six years, lay Principals ran the school, but in 1986 the board requested Weici to return as Principal. Weici served once again from 1986 to 1995, during which time he constructed more facilities for the school.

Due to health reasons, in 1995 Weici passed on the administration of the school to his monk-disciple, Zhengyuan .

On a visit to Cebu in 1999, the nun Jingping was persuaded to become the Principal and she served in this role until 2004, when she had to return to Manila to carry out her earlier projects (see entry on Miao De Chan Temple). After Jingping left, a nun disciple of Weici, Lingkun , who had been teaching the Buddhist classes at the school, became the Principal.

The school performed best and had the most stability when it was run by Weici. After his time, student numbers declined. In 2010, a Korean company was entrusted with the management of the school, but it remains to be seen whether this new arrangement will serve the goals of the school, especially in terms of propagating Buddhism.

Buddhist Activities

Short, daily Buddhist chants to begin and end classes

Weekly class in Buddhism for all levels, taught by scholarship recipients of the Dharma Master Wei Chi Scholarship Fund

6. Avalokiteśvara School (Guanyin Xuexiao)

Contact and Basic Information

J.R. Estrada Street, Tetuan, Zamboanga City

Tel. 062 9910412

Students: approximately 150

Levels: kindergarten to secondary school

History

Seeing the need for Buddhist and Chinese education in the city, Chuanguan and his two companions, Chuanhai and Daolü , who had been in Zamboanga for ten years, set out to open a new school in 1968. The property behind Hoc Chuan Temple was purchased, and with the help of the lay Buddhists Ding Fujian and Su Shihua , the first, modest school building was constructed and the new school named after Guanyin in her Sanskrit name. Chuanguan was also assisted by the scholar-monks Weici and Miaoqin. It was the latter's idea to name the school after Guanyin.

Chuanguan served as the first Principal, opening only the kindergarten level in 1968 and adding the subsequent level each year. By 1971, more facilities were needed and construction commenced on a new three-storey building, which was completed in 1973. The first batch of grade school graduates were produced in 1975, and the school had enough confidence to open a high school department that same year.

When Chuanguan passed away in 1993, the board of trustees temporarily took over management of the school. The new abbot of Hoc Chuan Temple, Chuanchan , arrived in 1995 and took over the management of the school as

well. He built more facilities for the school in 2003, including an area for the temple’s charitable projects.

Buddhist Activities

Weekly class in Buddhism for all levels, with a focus on Guanyin as the school’s spiritual patron

Students are scheduled for Friday devotions at the temple

7. Philippine Academy of Sakya – Davao (Longhua Xuexiao)

Contact and Basic Information

Cobaguio Avenue, Davao City

Tel. 082 2271314; 2217992

Students: approximately 240

Levels: kindergarten to secondary school

History

Almost ten years after founding the Longhua Temple in the city, Guangfan wanted to open a school in 1978 and began with a modest school building inside the temple compound. However, he lacked the human resources to open a school. In 1993, a Sunday school program teaching Buddhism was launched for students of all ages, and the following year formal education at the school began with kindergarten classes. More buildings and facilities were added in the succeeding years, and by the school's fifteenth anniversary (counting from 1994), a new building had been constructed on the property across the street from the temple's school side.

Guangfan served as the first Principal of the school, succeeded by Nengzhen in 2002. Lay Buddhists were instrumental in assisting the monks, most notably Janice Limso and Nora Wong.

Buddhist Activities

Weekly class in Buddhism for all levels, taught as part of Chinese class

Students are scheduled for monthly devotions at the temple led by the abbot

Informal education and cultural activities

Aside from formal educational work in schools, other activities strive to plant good roots by making productive use of young people's leisure time. In a number of places like Seng Guan Temple, "Sunday School" style classes are organized for children and teenagers, as well as summer camps organized by temple or school communities.

The publications work of Buddhist monastics and their disciples also aim at informal education. In the last chapter I discussed the production of texts by monastics. In 2015, only one regular publication remained in print, the magazine Buddhism in the Philippines, published by Daoyuan. Other publications and audiovisual materials from abroad frequently make their way to the schools and temples, distributed for free. In this area the Philippine branch of the Chin Kung Foundation is quite active. The group has started an informal kindergarten and hopes to open their own school in the future.[12]

In recent years, there has also been an effort to introduce Buddhism to non-Chinese people. This is the thinking behind the Buddhist camps organized by the Miao De Chan Bodhisattva Society for the university students who are recipients of the Society's scholarship grants, and the Foguangshan Fa Tzang Temple in Bacolod, whose camp is open to both Chinese and non-Chinese, including foreigners. These camps feature lectures in English, chanting, arts and calligraphy, martial arts, and a taste of the monastic daily lifestyle.

The same thinking pervades the public celebration of the Buddha's birthday at shopping malls, done in recent years by the Miao De Chan Bodhisattva Society and the Foguangshan branches in different cities. The highlight of these celebrations is the bathing of the Buddha ritual, which people at large are invited to participate in as a simple ritual of purification.

That these latter activities are open to non-Chinese people indicates a shift away from the ethnocentric focus of Chinese Buddhist organizations. This is done by organizing activities in non-Chinese spaces, and by the use of English as the medium of communication. The link between Chinese culture and Buddhism, therefore, is slowly being relaxed. I will return to this trend in the concluding chapter. At present, the Chinese cultural veneer is still very much evident in the

activities of Chinese Buddhist institutions.

Planting good roots and creating affinities

Planting good roots and creating affinities are the two ideas often given as the rationale for Buddhist work in education, both formal and informal. It is also the motivation behind cultural activities such as celebrations at shopping malls, Buddhist camps, and publications. The thinking is that such activities lay the foundation for the future growth of Buddhism in people.

To plant good roots seems to be a catch-all idea to explain a variety of activities, but it cannot be denied, at least from the personal stories of my informants, that their active practice of Buddhism is due to the good roots planted in them by others. For example, the coordinator of the Sunday School at Seng Guan Temple says:

> When we were little, my aunt went to Seng Guan Temple every week, so we just joined her. I remember the Great Compassion water …. At that time I didn't know what the water was all about, but just went along with things …. but then that's the way "good roots" are planted and if you have the affinity then when you grow up you will learn more …. So that's how I started. It's important to plant good roots during childhood so that these will bear fruit in adulthood. This was my experience and that's why I remained a Buddhist—going with my aunt, then coming here on Sundays while I was in school.[13]

The concept of creating affinities is related to the system of dependent co-arising, the causes and conditions that explain phenomena from a Buddhist perspective. In the story of the Fayu Temple in Palawan that we considered earlier, the construction of the temple materialized because, the founder said, the required affinities were finally present. It took many years because the necessary conditions took time to put in place.

Similarly, activities like the Sunday School at Seng Guan Temple did not appear out of a grand plan on the part of the temple, but out of a small group's initiative, later matched by the support of temple authorities. The same informant as above

says

In school, there was a Chinese registrar—Wong Huidin—she knew I was from a Buddhist family and invited me to come here and join the youth group. Many people say that Buddhism is for old people, it's all about chanting. We wanted to give young people a deeper understanding of Buddhism … in 1971 when I graduated from college, I joined the group here (Youth Activities Center Qingnian Huodong Zhongxin) to organize the summer classes (ten Sundays) for the children. Then I began teaching here; those of us who were school teachers were requested to speak on some simple Buddhist topics. I also helped in the monthly class at Che Wan Temple. The Center was dissolved by 1979, but we had been doing it for several years, so Master Ruijin told me to continue organizing it … we had learned some songs and even went to people's homes, like the caroling of the Catholics;[14] I could sing and teach, and play an instrument, I was a teacher, so we started organizing the Sunday school during the summer. We are all volunteers here, and in the beginning we had to pitch in to prepare the materials and food. Then Master Ruijin said we could use the income from the parking building downstairs to fund our activities. He had noticed that we were using our own money for the activities and he said that shouldn't be the case.[15]

In this informant's story, it is clear how affinities were established between the Chinese registrar and the student, who became an active participant in temple life and was later instrumental in sustaining the Sunday School. Planting good roots and creating affinities are different ways of relating with people in the hope that there will be positive outcomes for the spread of Buddhism.

From a non-Buddhist perspective, it can be said that the whole idea of creating affinities is just a Buddhist way of talking about the importance of relationships, especially the Chinese concept of guanxi , or the success that can come out of personal networking. Guanxi can mean "connections" or "relations" (Gold et al. 2002, 3–6), and can be based on common ties such as kinship, native place, and ethnicity, or shared experiences like attending the same school or serving in the same organization. It can also be "produced" when new relations are established for the purpose of mutual benefit, as in the world of business (Kipnis 2002, 22).

Guanxi implicitly implies a system of mutual interest and benefit, a gift economy with no exact time frame (Yang 1994).

Related to guanxi are other elements of Chinese sociality such as ganqing (sentiment), renqing (human feelings), mianzi (face), and bao (reciprocity).[16] The depth of guanxi is directly related to the level of ganqing that is present, as in friendship (Smart 1999), and in the management of guanxi relations, the avoidance of ganqing can be necessary so as to keep guanxi on an instrumental level (Kipnis 2002).

Guanxi has been perceived both positively and negatively. It is a positive experience when it points to humane interactions that can be rooted in Confucian ideas of roles, relationships, rituals, and social harmony; or it can be negative when it refers to corrupt practices such as bribery as the only way to get things done. Scholars have debated whether guanxi is a unique and defining element of Chinese culture, or whether it is just another word for the "personal networks, social capital, and gift economies found in all societies" (Gold et al. 2002, 3). Recent scholarship, however, has chosen to move beyond problems of definition and focus instead on contemporary practices of guanxi, and relate these to wider studies of social networks to see how the concept fares when compared to social relations in other cultures. Gold et. al. (2002, 18) identify the challenge of "figuring out the specific ways and under what circumstances guanxi matters in China's transforming economy" as a promising field of research. This could be expanded to the study of guanxi beyond politics and economics, specifically as operative in religion.

Guanxi became important in contemporary China especially in the reform era that began in the late 1970s. Legal and economic structures in China were in flux and guanxi became a key strategy for taking advantage of opportunities in the new China (Yang 1994). It was also during this time that religious institutions in China began to operate again as places of worship were returned to religious adherents. Guanxi no doubt played a role in negotiating the use of religious spaces and the extent of religious activities, as Adam Chau has demonstrated in his fieldwork in Shaanxi (2006), where relationships with local officials were crucial to the practice of local religion.

The Chinese Buddhist ideas of planting good roots and creating affinities are definitely rooted in Buddhist discourse, but I would also regard them as "soft" ways of producing guanxi with a religious end in view. Imparting basic Buddhist

education to hundreds of students is a way of planting good roots in the idiom of Buddhism, and producing guanxi in the idiom of Chinese social networking. The same goes for Sunday School and charitable activities. These can be described as the creation of affinities or the production of guanxi.

In the religious context, however, the mutuality of guanxi is less emphasized. Buddhist organizations and individual believers are more open-ended in their expectations, unlike the guanxi involved in business and political relationships. There is only a hope that people will respond to Buddhist initiatives and seek to know more about Buddhism, but this is not expected as a matter of course. Further, there is recognition, especially where affinities are concerned, that there are factors beyond one's control. Finding the ideal site for construction of a new temple, or ensuring the long-term sustainability of a program such as Sunday School classes, are not matters that can be resolved through personal networking alone. The total situation has to be considered, and this can be explained by the teaching on dependent co-arising from which the idea of creating affinities comes.

Planting good roots and creating affinities are Chinese Buddhist strategies for propagating Buddhism, especially the hard work involved in educational and cultural endeavors. These ways of relating with people are related to Chinese ideas such as guanxi in making connections with people, but there is less utilitarian instrumentality and reciprocity expected.[17]This is due to the Buddhist understanding of the way the universe works, specifically the universal law of causation that produces effects over multiple life spans.[18]

The idea of planting good roots, so common in ordinary Buddhist discourse, has its origin in the idea of the three unwholesome mental states, namely greed, anger, and delusion (Keown 2003, 8). These were collectively known as akuśala-mūla (Sanskrit), and their opposite were the kuśala-mūla (Sanskrit), the three good roots of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, expressed positively as unselfishness, benevolence, and understanding (Keown 2003, 151). All good and unskillful acts were ultimately due to these two sets of parallel roots. Good roots or shan'gen are also defined as "good seed sown by a good life to be reaped later" (Soothill and Hodous 1937, 369).

The theme of planting good roots can be found in the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, also known as the Diamond Sutra, first translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 402 CE (Yifa et al. 2007b, 80). In Chapter 6 of the

sutra, after Subhuti and the Buddha discuss emptiness, Subhuti asks whether in the future, there will be beings who will truly believe the teaching on emptiness. The Buddha replies that there will be people who hold the precepts and cultivate blessings, and accept the teaching as true. Such people, he says,

will have planted good roots with not just one Buddha, two Buddhas, three, four, or five Buddhas, but will have planted good roots with measureless millions of Buddhas. (Hsuan Hua 2002, 63).

Master Xuanhua, founder of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in the United States, in his commentary on this sutra, explains that making offerings or even mere closeness to the Triple Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha, are good roots that will bear fruit in an increase of wisdom (Ibid., 65). “Good roots are the firm foundation which comes from cultivation,” (Ibid.) he says, and such beings will produce sincere thoughts of belief upon hearing the Diamond Sutra.

The concept of good roots was used in the Diamond Sutra to explain the conditions necessary for accepting the teaching on emptiness. More immediately it has since been used by Chinese Buddhists to explain the rationale behind organizing activities that may not have immediate effect, but lay the foundation for future acceptance of the Dharma. The simple act of bringing young people to the temple and exposing them to chanting, celebrating Chinese festivals in a Buddhist context, or witnessing a Bathing the Buddha ritual—these are all ways of planting good roots[19] that can bear fruit in the future.

“Creating affinities” is a loose translation of jieyuan, defined as forming a cause, basis, or connection, especially for future salvation (Soothill and Hodous 1937, 386). In the literature of Foguangshan, this is understood as laying good foundations for the propagation of the Dharma. In his Foguang Dictionary, Master Xingyun says jieyuan originally referred to situations where, “although cultivation in this life can in no way result in liberation, there is an initial point of contact for fruition some time in the future.” (Shi Xingyun 1988, 5190) Chandler (2005, 171) points to jieyuan as Foguangshan’s motive in inviting people to make donations and print scriptures, or in distributing sweets to

children. Such activities may not lead to enlightenment in the present life, but they are seeds that can bear fruit in a future rebirth. The goal is to cultivate a positive disposition toward Buddhism, especially among elite members of society including politicians, because if such people embrace Buddhism, many others will be influenced to follow suit (Ibid., 172). Chandler also discusses jieyuan as a means of earning merit for Buddhists.

Chinese Buddhist work in education and culture converts very few people to Buddhism. One could wonder whether the material resources poured into such activities generates commensurate returns but my informants did not evaluate their activities on material terms. They are content to plant good roots and create affinities, produce a little guanxi, and leave the rest to the dynamics of causes and conditions.

From a consideration of planting good roots and creating affinities, I now turn to the charitable work of Chinese Buddhists to explore how their activities are related to similar organizations among overseas Chinese and how they fit into contemporary trends in Chinese Buddhism.

Chinese Buddhist charitable work

Chinese Buddhists operate eight charity clinics throughout the Philippines, apart from disaster relief operations and annual Christmas distribution drives for the poor. In this section I provide a wider context to these clinics, seeing them as closely related to similar organizations that emerged in Chinese history and among overseas Chinese in the contemporary era.

Link to Chinese charities and mutual aid associations in the Chinese diaspora

During the Tang dynasty, Buddhist monasteries were already known to operate fields of compassion called beitian in the form of “hospitals and dispensaries for the sick,” among other things (Chen 1964, 295). Under the Song, local elites supported welfare activities, especially famine relief (Smith 1987, 310). Lineage organizations looked after their own members.

Whereas the State was traditionally expected to be the sole provider for the needs of the people in accordance with Confucian models of reciprocity, Lai (1992, 7) marks the point when Buddhists were motivated by a higher teaching, that of compassion, to care for the needy as well. Lai also traces the development of the Chinese Buddhist tradition of caring for the sick and putting resources together in “inexhaustible treasuries,” which were discussed in the third chapter.

In the late Ming and early Qing, a new form of charitable work emerged in the activity of various types of “benevolent associations,” organized by local elites to care for widows and orphans, bury the unclaimed dead, build bridges or other infrastructure to benefit society. Smith (1987) ascribes the birth of these new forms of philanthropy and charitable giving to the availability of wealth, dissatisfaction with the Buddhist management of their own charities (Ibid., 317), and the link made between education and ethical living (Ibid., 319).[20] In time, these voluntary organizations became independent entities devoted solely to charitable work, unlike earlier efforts that were attached to the state, kinship groups, or monasteries.

Buddhist charities were substantially restricted during the Ming dynasty as new restrictions were imposed on monastic land and the state took over welfare functions (Lai 1992, 16). Only in the 20th century, inspired by Christian charities, would Buddhist charities take visible shape again. This would unfold in Taiwan and in overseas Chinese communities rather than in China, where decades of Communist rule halted the development of Buddhism in all its aspects.

Chinese charitable work in contemporary times, just like Chinese schools, find their context in the Chinese voluntary organizations that we considered earlier.

In overseas Chinese communities, organizations such as clan associations (by surname or hometown) served the important function of assisting members during emergencies, especially sickness, death, and bereavement. Such mutual aid associations have a long history in China, as the work of Smith (1987) and Lai (1992) indicate. In the Chinese diaspora, these organizations were particularly important for the first generations of immigrants who left their families behind in China. Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart (2006) have traced the evolution in function of voluntary organizations in the Chinese diaspora, providing examples from both the West and Southeast Asia.

As the immigrants settled into their new country and brought their families over from China or married locally, they also became more established economically and the "mutual aid" function of Chinese organizations became less pronounced. It remained a necessity only for the few Chinese who lived alone or for whatever reason, had no families to care for them. At this juncture, the Chinese organizations began to expand the scope of their charitable work, opening them to serving the non-Chinese. This has been observed both in the Philippines and in other overseas Chinese communities[21] and reflects the same trend in Chinese history where charity began with one's own kinship group but eventually expanded to serve the wider society (Smith 1987, 316).

In the case of Buddhist charity projects in the Philippines, however, the work was always directed at poor, non-Chinese Filipinos rather than the poorer Chinese members of the temple communities. This is not to say that there were never any Chinese people who were in need, but they could go to the many other Chinese associations for help. The few who sought medical assistance at the Buddhist clinics were naturally served as well, and I still witnessed a few instances of this during my fieldwork, but by and large, the Buddhist charities served the native Filipino population.[22]

TABLE 4

Charity Clinics Organized by Chinese Buddhist Organizations

	Name	Affiliated Te
1	Bon Lian Charity Clinic	Soc Yan Ten
2	Tze Hang Free Clinic	Un Siu Temp
3	Lotus Charity Center	Holy Buddh
4	Thousand Buddha Temple Medical and Dental Charity Clinics	Thousand Bu
5	Tzu Chi Charity Clinic	None/ Locat
6	Phu Shian Charity Clinic	Phu Shian T
7	Hoc Chuan Temple Charity Clinic	Hoc Chuan T
8	Long Hua Temple Charity Clinic	Long Hua Te

Notes:

The Tzu Chi movement has no temple building as such, but aside from its permanent charity clinic, it also runs cultural, educational, and environmental programs with facilities in Manila, Cebu, and Zamboanga. After major natural disasters hit the Visayas in 2013, they also began to operate in Bohol and Leyte.

The Hwa Chong Temple in Malabon, Manila, has a four-storey building completed in 1976 as a home for the aged. It also housed a charity clinic. In 2011, the home had only a handful of residents, and the clinic had ceased operations.

In 2012, the Holy Buddhist Temple in Cubao facilitated a project to build a Buddhist temple at the National Penitentiary (New Bilibid Prison) for the material and spiritual welfare of Chinese prisoners (both local and China-born, most of whom were convicted for drug offenses).

The practice of charitable work was linked to the longstanding practice of Chinese organizations, but being religiously motivated, the Buddhist charities from their inception served all people in need. In this respect, Buddhist charities are unique and more progressive than the Chinese charities that looked primarily after their own people.[23]

Chinese Budddhist charities in the Philippines are different from the Chinese kinship organizations because they mainly look after poor Filipinos, rather than Chinese people who are in need. This kind of work softens the perception of many Filipinos that Chinese people are all wealthy and dominate the economy.[24] The sight of Chinese Buddhists volunteering to assist in the medical needs of poor Filipinos projects an alternative image of the ethnic Chinese, granted that

such image-building is not the motivation behind the charitable work.

At the end of this chapter, I will explore my informants' views about the rationale of Buddhist charity. Before that, this brief historical outline of Chinese charitable work can be linked further to Buddhist charity in contemporary times, especially as framed by Humanistic Buddhism.

Humanistic Buddhism as socially engaged Buddhism

In Chapter 3, while tracing the development of Chinese Buddhism in the 20th century, we already encountered Yinshun's "Buddhism for the human realm" or Humanistic Buddhism, a development of Taixu's "Buddhism for the living" and a clarion call to return to the teachings of the Buddha. In Chapter 2, we saw Yinshun's role in heading two temples in the Philippines, cofounding a Buddhist school, and writing a textbook for secondary-school students. In addition, we have also considered the charitable work done by traditional Buddhist temples in the Philippines as well as that of modern movements originating in Taiwan such as Tzu Chi and Foguangshan.

The charitable work of Chinese Buddhist organizations in the Philippines can be linked to a larger movement within Buddhism that has come to be known as "socially engaged Buddhism." What contemporary Chinese Buddhist leaders such as Yinshun, Xingyun, Zhengyan, and Shengyan call Humanistic Buddhism, others in Southeast Asia and North America have called socially engaged Buddhism (Chandler 2004, 78). The two terms, though developing independently of each other, share the basic ideal of Buddhism addressing social if not political concerns, and therefore not being limited to personal spiritual cultivation. Yinshun in particular has emphasized that to practice Buddhism in the human realm is the original teaching of the Buddha (Travagnin 2007).

The Vietnamese monk Thic Nhat Hanh was the first to use the term "socially engaged Buddhism" in 1963. The context was the Vietnam War, and he was advocating a non-partisan pacifist approach (King 1994, 14). The term was later picked up in North America and Europe as an indication of a new trend in Buddhism, in contrast to the existing reputation of Buddhism as concerned only with individual practice and salvation.

Thic Nhat Hanh would later say that Buddhism has always been socially engaged. Winston King (1994, 16–19) has studied the evolution of Buddhist social engagement, citing Mahāyāna Buddhist texts that teach the bodhisattva ideal of compassion for all sentient beings. Among those he mentions are texts by Śāntideva and Nāgārjuna, and the story of Vimalakīrti. He also cites the historical example of King Aśoka's Buddhist welfare state in 3rd-century BCE

India.

As noted earlier, Chinese Buddhist monasteries had a strong tradition of charitable works until the imperial State, fearing public criticism for its failure to look after the people, took over all such functions (Lai 1992, 16). Thus began a period of Buddhist isolation from social welfare functions.

There are other reasons for the general impression that Buddhism is not socially engaged. In The Social Face of Buddhism, Ken Jones (1989) describes some Asian mindsets that contributed to a socially detached Buddhism. Among these are the cyclical view of life that led to passive acceptance of life's ups and downs, and the view that society is little more than a space where individuals work out the dynamics of their karma. There is also the idea, still popular today, that the way to change the world is to change oneself first, thus emphasizing personal spiritual cultivation (King 1994, 21) rather than social action.

In the 20th century, therefore, the emergence of engaged Buddhism captured the imaginations of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Engaged Buddhism has in fact spawned its own movements and attendant scholarship both in Asia and North America (Chandler 2004, 78–79). Sallie King (2009) has a book-length study of contemporary Buddhist engagement, covering the issues of war and peace, economics, ecology, and human rights.

While the idea of engaged Buddhism has been applied in contexts as diverse as Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Tibet, Humanistic Buddhism is a framework that has largely been confined to Chinese Buddhism. Part of the reason for this is its doctrinal link to the Pure Land tradition. Buddhism in the human realm is in fact often described by Xingyun and others as the task of "creating a pure land on this earth" (Chandler 2004, 56ff.). Nevertheless, Humanistic Buddhism is one form of socially engaged Buddhism, and Sallie King includes the work of Tzu Chi in her survey of socially engaged Buddhism (King 2009, 6).[25]

The Buddhist charitable work in the Philippines is located within the Humanistic Buddhism of Taixu and Yinshun, and its modern appropriation by Xingyun and Zhengyan of Foguangshan and Tzu Chi, respectively. This is the Great Tradition which has given birth to the many compassionate works carried out by Buddhists in the Philippines. I have already noted that Buddhist charitable work in the Philippines, though linked as well to the model of Chinese voluntary organizations, immediately served a predominantly non-Chinese clientele, which

is not surprising given the poverty of the Philippines. But what exactly motivated the individuals who took an active part in the works?

Beyond ethnic boundaries: Compassion for the poor

I asked all of my informants why they thought Buddhists were engaging in charitable work. Without exception, all said that charitable work expresses compassion, which is a key value in Buddhism. PC[26] says, “It’s the spirit of compassion that we live out by doing charity work.”

Some expanded on the issue and linked compassion to Buddhist teachings. AG[27] says,

Although the basic level for most people is to help in charity work because it’s a good thing to do, we do it to walk the bodhisattva path. Our Master taught us about the six pāramitās [perfections and the first one is giving.

The Sunday School coordinator that I mentioned earlier puts it another way, “We want to save all who are suffering.”

The most insightful answer I got came from the lady organizer[28] of a meditation class. I asked her about the importance of charitable work in Buddhism, and she responded by recounting a story to me. There were two brothers, she said, and the older one spent his time on spiritual cultivation while the younger one focused on earning money. The latter often criticized his elder brother for spending his time on “useless” things like study and meditation. The younger brother became rich and the elder brother remained poor. Later, the younger brother died and was reborn as a majestic elephant, strong and garbed in fine cloths for the use of the emperor. He wondered, however, why he was reborn as an elephant. The elder brother then explains to him that he was reborn as an animal because he lacked wisdom. He had prosperity and this was manifested in his majesty as a royal elephant, but he did not have enough wisdom. This was the reason behind his rebirth as an animal.

With this story, the lady was answering my question indirectly. Tears welled in her eyes as she told me that it was equally important to cultivate wisdom along

with prosperity. In other words, wisdom is to look after oneself materially without neglecting spiritual practices and showing concern for others. Through this story, she was telling me that to have wisdom is to realize the importance of charitable work.

In a country like the Philippines where there is massive poverty and where the Christian churches operate so many charities, where disaster relief is a necessity several times a year, it is not surprising that Buddhist communities also do their share in serving the poor. My informants were unanimous in seeing this kind of work as a manifestation of Buddhist compassion, a sharing in the bodhisattva ideal of alleviating the suffering of others.[29]

I tried probing deeper and asked whether there might be other motivations for serving the poor. Was it a way of promoting Buddhism? Since the Chinese were a minority in the country and were perceived to be dominating the economy, could it be that charitable work was a way of earning the acceptance of the Filipino population? Were the goods given away every Christmas or whenever natural calamities hit the country tokens of Chinese benevolence? In short, was Buddhist charitable giving a political move aimed at strengthening the place of the Chinese community in Filipino society?

First, on whether the goal of charitable work is to promote Buddhism, my informants told me that converting people is not their goal. Just as the students in their schools do not have to become Buddhists, so the recipients of their aid do not have to embrace Buddhism. Some Buddhist groups precede their charitable activities with brief talks about the Buddha or about ethical living, but these are done as ways of introducing their groups to the people. If the Buddhists are able to share a simple Buddhist idea with poor Filipinos, this already gives them much joy. WT[30] told me:

When we give to the Filipinos during natural disasters, they are in great need, if they learn to recite Omitofo, we are already very happy. Even if you've spent five thousand pesos and the result is just that one phrase, it's enough.

Among the Chinese Buddhists, there are very few who can speak in public using a Filipino language. This barrier makes it implausible that charitable activities

would be used for the purpose of propagating Buddhism. This reality is consistent with the fact that language was also the main reason why Buddhism has largely remained an ethnic Chinese phenomenon in the Philippines. Again, however, this is changing in some Buddhist communities where there is more effort to use English or Filipino in sharing Buddhism with non-Chinese people.

Secondly, on whether charitable work is a way for the Chinese to gain social acceptance, my informants did not subscribe to this line of thinking. They acknowledged that some people might cynically ascribe selfish motives to their charitable work, but their self-understanding is that they want to practice compassion. WT says further:

It is the Federation [of Chinese Chambers of Commerce], not Tzu Chi or Buddhist groups, that is concerned about giving the Chinese a good position and not be discriminated against. Our purpose is compassion. So we do the same thing, but for different reasons.

Another informant takes the perspective of the recipients of charitable aid. TPC[31] says,

Naturally, you would not think ill of those who are helping you. That is there, but it is not our purpose. We just want to help those who have no resources for medical treatment.

The beneficiaries end up with a positive regard for Chinese people, but this is not the intention of Buddhist giving.

Chinese Buddhist charitable work in the Philippines is motivated by the Buddhist value of compassion, which supports the quest for wisdom and defines the bodhisattva path in spiritual practice. AY[32] summarized it well when she told me,

In Buddhism, if you use the teachings, wisdom and compassion are the two hands that provide the balance. Ever since, this has been the teaching to us. It is the goal we must strive for, like a plane that cannot fly without all the parts.

While there may be other reasons for doing charitable work, such as the promotion of Buddhism and the acceptance of the ethnic Chinese by the native Filipinos, the primary stated intention is to offer compassion for those who are suffering.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the social and cultural projects of Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines, especially their work in education and charity. We have contextualized these endeavors within the efforts of voluntary organizations among the Chinese overseas, and seen how they are spaces and environments where Chinese identity is highlighted. The schools help preserve Chinese identity through education in Chinese language and culture, and promote Buddhism subtly through the Buddhist environment created in each school. People who are recognizably Chinese and Buddhist operate the charity clinics. These places thus serve as spaces where Chinese identity is preserved at the same time as Buddhist compassion is practiced.

Buddhists see the hard work of education and charity as efforts at creating affinities, planting good roots, and practicing compassion. The efforts may not bear fruit in the present, and there are in fact very few conversions that result from these efforts, but in the Buddhist system of multiple life cycles, there is no telling what contribution these activities will ultimately make toward the salvation of the beneficiaries.

As I conducted my fieldwork in the Buddhist schools, the informal cultural projects like Sunday Schools, and the charity projects, I probed the motivations behind all these activities. I asked whether conversion was a goal in the schools and cultural activities, and whether Buddhist philanthropy was sociopolitically motivated. The responses I received were all framed in Buddhist discourse, and I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of my respondents. There is always the danger in fieldwork of respondents giving what they view as the “correct” answers, but I did not sense that they were doing public relations work for Buddhism. I have taken what they shared with me at face value, and have found no other evidence to the contrary.

In fact, if lesser intentions had motivated the projects, then they would have been organized differently. If the Buddhist schools had conversion as a goal, then more class time and more school activities would be devoted to religion, but this was not the case. If Buddhist charities had wanted to proselytize among the recipients of their beneficence, they could have instituted some structures to gain

the religious adherence of their beneficiaries, such as mandatory attendance at dharma assemblies, but again, this was not the case. It is true that the lack of human resources is also a significant contributing factor to the relatively small scale of Buddhist educational and social projects, but my view is that the Buddhists understand their place in the Chinese community. They know that the majority of Chinese have become Christians, in name if not in practice, and they are only doing their best to share Buddhism with others, especially with the younger generations.

The views of my informants clearly come from an emic or insider perspective. They explain their educational and charitable work from a Buddhist viewpoint, using terms that are meaningful to them. As anthropologists focusing on methodology such as Russell Bernard (2002) have noted, however, the etic or outsider perspective can detect more universal values in the phenomenon. Among Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines, the insiders talk of creating affinities and planting good roots rather than proselytizing, but an "outsider" like me sees religiously-motivated charitable work, and a very soft approach to proselytizing. In my opinion, the Buddhists would be happy to have some conversions as the result of their charity work, but this goal is not made explicit and not used as a yardstick for evaluating the importance of their work. The possibility of making conversions is not discounted, although the approach taken is not aggressive at all.

Religions share their faith with others through educational and other projects in the hope that new adherents of the religion may be gained, and the Chinese Buddhists I have encountered are no different, except that they have taken a very soft approach. There have been instances in history when religious charity has been used to gain converts, as evidenced by, for example the Rice Christians[33] of Asia in the 19th century, but such an approach has not characterized Chinese Buddhism. The prevailing discourse from the insider perspective uses very positive and inviting language, that of "causes and conditions," "affinities," and "good roots" that will bear fruit in the future in ways no one can predict.

In the final chapter, I will return to the theme of Chinese cultural identity, already introduced in the first chapter, and explore how the practice of Buddhism in the Philippines has contributed a particular way of predicating Chinese identity in the Philippines.

1 In the last few years, these two communities have organized “Bathing the Buddha” ceremonies at shopping malls. They display beautiful images of the child Siddhartha and invite people to come forward and pour water over them as a simple “prayer for purification.” As mentioned in Chapter 3, I accepted the invitation of Foguangshan in May 2011 to attend their celebration at the Mall of Asia in Pasay City, Metro Manila. It struck me that the images of Siddhartha, the Buddha as a child, would easily remind Filipinos of the Sto. Niño, an immensely popular local Catholic devotion to the Child Jesus.

2 Today, the hospital and cemetery are managed by the Philippine-Chinese Charitable Association, the descendant of the Communidad de Chino. It has a board of directors composed of prominent Chinese Filipinos.

3 For focused studies on Chinese organizations in the Philippines, especially in the postwar era, see Wickberg (1988, 1998, 2010) and See (1988).

4 In a paper on the changing identity of the Philippine-Chinese, Antonio Tan (1988, 181) says that “the first generation established Chinese institutions to maintain and preserve ethnic identity” and gave the examples of family and lineage associations, schools, and newspapers.

5 Teresita Ang-See (1997) discusses the problems and prospects of Chinese-language education in the Philippines. From 1949 until 1975, the Philippine government allowed Taiwan to control the content of Chinese-language education in the Philippines, but thereafter the government instituted a policy of “Filipinization,” which reduced the number of hours that schools could devote each day to the study of Chinese (Wickberg 2010, 137). Ang-See concludes, however, that the ultimate problem is the schools’ failure to understand the ethnographic changes that have taken place in the Chinese community. China today has a greater influence over the schools, sending hundreds of volunteer teachers to serve for one or two years in the Philippines and deploying them in schools throughout the country. I have personal knowledge of this in my

previous work (2005–2008) at the Confucius Institute at the Ateneo de Manila University, and my present work as President of Xavier School.

6 In the previous paragraph, I presented the approximate figure of 80,000 students enrolled at Chinese schools across the country. As the figures in the profiles will show, there are about 1,660 students at the Chinese Buddhist schools in 2011. This figure would represent about two percent of the total Chinese student population of the Philippines. While these students studying at Buddhist schools are not necessarily Buddhists, the figure of two percent is still significant when compared to Ang-See's survey in 1995 showing that two percent of the Chinese-Filipino population described themselves as Buddhists in religious affiliation (Ang-See 1997, 57). All these figures come from surveys done at different times, but I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Antonello Palumbo, for making the calculations and observing that the two percent of the Chinese community who are Buddhists are responsible for educating two percent of the total Chinese student population in the country. This confirms the relative impact of Chinese Buddhist schools in the community. The numbers indicate that they are able to educate a proportion of the population that corresponds to the size of the Buddhist community.

7 As mentioned in Chapter 1, mestizos are Filipinos with mixed parentage. In the Chinese context, it means that one parent is Chinese and the other is not, or both are only partly Chinese. Mestizos are known to be culturally more Filipino than Chinese, though they may study at a Chinese school precisely to preserve their Chinese heritage. See Chu (2010) for an in-depth study of Chinese mestizos in Manila.

8 These texts were discussed in Chapter 4.

9 This is practiced at the Philippine Academy of Sakya and the Samantabhadra Institute in Manila, where there is also a special devotion to the school's patron, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. The ten vows of the

bodhisattva, as found in the Avata saka Sūtra, are recited daily.

10 This was shared with me by Zhengzhong , the monk who teaches the religion class.

11 My knowledge of the practices of Christian schools in the Philippines comes from personal experience. My primary and secondary education was at a Catholic school run by the religious congregation I belong to, which today owns and manages nine schools in the country.

12 Master Chin Kung (Jingkong, b. 1927) is a monk in Taipei who promotes Pure Land teachings around Southeast Asia and North America. His groups go by various names, such as Amitābha Societies or Pure Land Learning Centers. In Manila, his group often borrows the facilities of the Che Wan Temple in Sta. Mesa, but hopes to develop on their own in the coming years. During my fieldwork, the group was promoting a text called Dizigui (A Student's Code of Conduct), a Qing dynasty collection of texts from the Analects of Confucius used to educate young children.

13 Personal interview with CLS, 3 October 2010.

14 Caroling refers to the Christian custom of visiting homes and singing Christmas carols as a way of spreading Christmas cheer and raising funds for good causes.

15 Personal interview with CLS, 3 October 2010.

16 The sources I have used here—Yang (1994), Smart (1999), Kipnis (2002), and Gold et al. (2002)—develop the system of guanxi in greater detail and relate it to these other elements of Chinese social relations. Most of the literature on guanxi focuses on theorizing political and economic relationships.

17 Mayfair Yang (1994) focused on the dynamics of guanxi in China's urban settings, but acknowledges that in rural areas, there is more personal affection involved and less instrumentality in relationships. She describes these as renqing more than guanxi relationships.

18 See the entry on "causation" in Epstein's Buddhism A to Z (2003), and pratītya-samutpāda in Keown's Dictionary of Buddhism (2003).

19 Though not developed thematically, there are also references to planting good roots in the Mahāparinirvā a Sūtra (Chapter 2) and the La kāvatāra Sūtra (Chapters 2 and 8).

20 Smith (1995, 1998, 2009) also analyzes the shift in charitable giving from the late-Ming to early Qing, noting how merchant philanthropy emerged as a trend no longer confined to the elite, and how this changed the motivations for philanthropic work. Charitable giving was no longer carried out for its own sake or for spiritual rewards, but also as a way of demarcating social relations. See also Leung (1997), and Fuma (2005) on charitable associations during the Ming-Qing period, and Chen B.L. (1996) on types of associations in China.

21 This was the case in the work of Chinese religious associations in Singapore (Topley 1961; Kuah-Pearce 2009, 167ff.) and Malaysia (Tan C.B. 2012, 95) and Chinese temples in Thailand (Formoso 1996). Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart (2006, 14) also made this observation in their study of several overseas Chinese communities. For the Philippines, it had been observed by

Wickberg (1998, 186).

22 From their inception, the clinics treated people using Western-style medicine, unlike the free clinics run by Buddhists in Singapore that served a Chinese clientele and treated them using traditional Chinese medicine (Kuah-Pearce 2009, 182).

23 I am referring here to the charitable functions of lineage and hometown associations, already discussed earlier. There are other Chinese voluntary organizations like the national network of volunteer fire brigades that serve the general population rather than only the Chinese.

24 Note 11 in Chapter 1 provides references to Chinese economic history in the Philippines that will explain why all ethnic Chinese are perceived to be wealthy, even if in reality, most are small- to medium-scale business people.

25 Yao (2012) entitled the published version of her 2001 doctoral dissertation Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism, but the theme is not developed in the book, which focuses more on the organizational structure, membership, and popular appeal of the movement.

26 I interviewed PC on 7 November 2010. As indicated in Chapter 2, I refer to my informants only by their initials to protect their privacy.

27 Interview on 13 December 2010.

28 Interview with APT on 21 November 2010.

29 Kuah-Pearce (2009, 167) has observed the same motivation in the Buddhist welfare projects in Singapore.

30 Interview on 10 February 2011.

31 Interview on 20 February 2011.

32 Interview on 16 January 2011.

33 This phenomenon has merited a Merriam-Webster unabridged dictionary entry http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ (last accessed 8 May 2013) and refers to people who convert to Christianity in exchange for worldly benefits. For a reference to examples in China, see Laamann (2006, 35).

CHAPTER 6

Chinese Buddhist Culture and Chinese Identity

We have already examined the data on Chinese Buddhism as it developed in the 20th century and found expression in the Philippines. We paid special attention to its local adaptation and its role as a nexus point for experiencing Chinese ethnic identity through religious and sociocultural activities. This final chapter will take a more thematic approach to religion and identity. What follows is an analysis of the interplay between ethnocultural (Chinese-Filipino) and religious (Buddhist) identities, and a consideration of the nature of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines in terms of adaptation, orthodoxy, and its contribution to expressions of Chinese identity.

I will begin with a consideration of the social forces that shaped Chinese Buddhism, citing examples from other overseas Chinese communities and using Hans Mol's theory of religion as the sacralization of identity. The typologies of religious and ethnic identity will be detailed and linked to the social forces that attracted the first generations of migrant Chinese to the Buddhist temples.

Analyzing the work of Chinese Buddhist institutions in the Philippines, I propose that rather than assimilation or integration into mainstream Philippine society, they in fact began as the strongholds for a more isolationist view of the Chinese community. Only in recent years, especially with the move in several temples to conduct their activities in English, is there a more integrationist approach that simultaneously plants the seeds for a Chinese-Filipino and a Buddhist identity.

I will end this chapter with a consideration of the nature of Chinese Buddhism as it adapts to different contexts, and its implications for religious identities.

Sacralization of identity: The social forces that shape Chinese Buddhism

Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines did not develop in a vacuum. The temple communities were responding to social forces that helped the overseas Chinese find their way in the new country through participation in a Chinese temple community, where they continued the devotions they observed in their hometown in China or deepened their spiritual practices. This is the story behind the birth of Chinese temples throughout the Chinese diaspora, especially in North America and Southeast Asia.

For example, Foguangshan's Hsi Lai (Xilai) Temple in Southern California functions not only as a place for Buddhist devotions, but also as a Chinese community center where language and culture programs are offered (Lin 1996). The temple is the context in which overseas Chinese, mostly from Taiwan, who immigrated after American immigration laws became more liberal in 1965, "reinforce and reinvent Chinese identity through religion, ethnicity, nationality, culture, family, and education." (Lin 1996, 115) In a study comparing a Chinese Buddhist and a Chinese Christian church, also in Southern California, in terms of their engagement with American society, Carolyn Chen locates her study of these two communities serving Taiwanese immigrants in the literature on immigrant religious institutions as "an ethnic fortress where immigrants can communally practice, preserve, and pass down their ethnic traditions." (Chen 2002, 218)

Tannie Liu (2010) studied three Chinese Buddhist temple communities in Canada, each one belonging to a different tradition, and argues that more than being just places for the assertion of Chinese ethnic identity, they are examples of the global transformation of Chinese Buddhism.

In studies of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, ancestor worship in Malaysia (Clarke 2000) and funeral rites in Thailand (Hill 1992) have been shown to play an important role in the expression of Chinese identity in multicultural and multiethnic contexts. Because the rituals are linked to Chinese values of filial piety and veneration of ancestors, they become unique loci for connecting with "a Chinese past." (Hill 1992, 328)

In Jean DeBernardi's study of popular religious practices among the Chinese in

Penang, Malaysia, many of her subjects told her that such practices were their "civilization," "culture," or "customs and habits" (DeBernardi 2004, 218). Divination, temple festivals, and ancestor worship were part and parcel of everyday social and religious life. Such practices helped define cultural identity.

In another part of Malaysia, Mohamed Yusoff Ismail (1993) studied a Theravada Buddhist temple in the village of Kelantan, where the minority Siamese [sic] population has maintained its distinct ethnic identity through the practice of Buddhism. Even if half of the village population is made up of ethnic Chinese who also participate in temple life, it is the Siamese who exercise leadership and commitment in temple affairs and the temple is the locus for asserting Siamese identity. In this case, ethnic and cultural identity come together in the maintenance of the temple.

Tan Chee Beng provides other examples of the roles played by Chinese religions in the "negotiation and construction of Chinese identities" (Tan 1995, 158) in Malaysia. He mentions the Chinese in Malacca, Kelantan, and Trengganu as communities where religion had a crucial role in the articulation of Chinese identity.

Grove Griffith Elder (1982) studied the role of rituals in reflecting the ethnicity of Chinese in Thailand.

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce has done extensive studies on Chinese religions in Singapore, and has described generational differences and the different layers of cultural identity for Singapore Chinese. She identifies temples as one of the social institutions that helped early generations of Chinese immigrants to experience Chinese culture (Kuah 2000, 35, 45). Song Guangyu (2011, 103, 108) also highlights the social function of Chinese religion in building Chinese group identity in the experience of the Chinese folk cult Yiguandao[1] in Singapore.

The present research on Chinese Buddhist temples in the Philippines can be located in this body of literature that acknowledges the role of Chinese religions in the expression of Chinese ethnic identity. I would suggest that the same phenomenon can be observed in the Daoist and folk temples of the Philippines as well. While my focus was on Buddhist temples, I found many other temples in the country. In Metro Manila, there are the Thai To Temple (Dadao Xuantan) in Caloocan City, Jiu Xiao Dadao Guan in Chinatown in Manila, and the Kiu Pat

Liong Shiao Temple, Inc. (Jiuba Lingxiao Bao Dian) in Pasay City, all built by the same group of Daoist devotees that split up due to internal differences.[2] The latter temple claims to be the headquarters of Daoism in the Philippines, calling itself the Philippine-Chinese Taoism General Association (Feilübin Zhongguo Daojiao Zonghui).

Manila has numerous other temples devoted to different deities, such as the big Baowang Gong in Pasay City, the Bao'an Gong dedicated to Baosheng Dadi (The Great Emperor Who Protects Life) and Kim Luan Temple (Jinluan Dadao Guan) dedicated to Yaochi Jinmu (The Golden Mother of the Shining Lake), both in Malate, Manila.[3] There are several temples dedicated to Guandi in Manila, and there are at least two in Cebu.

In Cebu and Davao, there are Daoist temples that are known simply as "Taoist Temple." In Baguio, there is a unique place of worship called the Bell Church, founded by Cantonese devotees of Jigong in 1960.[4]

These temples[5] are much more than religious spaces. They also have social functions that attract the Chinese and provide them with experiences that express their Chinese ethnic identity. This phenomenon confirms the findings of studies on the role of local temples as culture centers (Feuchtwang 2001, 143-150) and on Chinese religion as a rationalization of Chinese society (Lagerwey 2010).[6]

There are also wider studies with similar findings, such as Ebaugh and Chafetz's (2000) volume on the immigrant religious communities in Houston, Texas, which includes a case study by Fenggang Yang (2000) on a Chinese Gospel Church.

Why would the practice of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines, and by extension, any practice of Chinese religion predicate Chinese identity in the Philippines? It is of course not the only means of expressing Chinese identity, and generational differences must always be considered because the younger generations no longer experience the Chinese temple in the same way as their forebears, but for those who continue to regularly participate in temple life, what are the social forces that motivate them to persevere in their practice?

Hans Mol's understanding of religion as the "sacralization of identity" is helpful in answering this question. Using the example of German and Irish immigrant communities in the United States, Mol says that ethnic groups preserve their

identity through religion because they

protect individual immigrants from the acculturation demands of the host society … by creating a home away from home they preserve an old world identity in the new country. In doing so they contribute to the looser weave or the lesser integration of the receiving culture …. In the countries of immigration, migrant churches have always been the most effective bastions of ethnic preservation. (Mol 1976, 174)

Mol identifies four “mechanisms of sacralization” that can be applied to Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines. The four mechanisms are objectification, ritual, myth, and commitment. I shall discuss each briefly and link them to the social forces that attract Chinese people to Buddhist practice in the Philippines.

The first mechanism, objectification, is defined as

the tendency to sum up the variegated elements of mundane existence in a transcendental frame of reference where they can appear in a more orderly, more consistent, and more timeless way. (Ibid., 206)

It is “the projection of meaning and order into a transcendent point of reference (Ibid., 214).” For Mol,

without the religious sanctioning of abstract forms of thought, these forms of thought would never have grown to the point where they appear to be completely independent from this sanction (Ibid., 214).

The practice of Chinese Buddhism sacralizes Chinese values of honoring

parents, especially as this value is expressed in the care of the dead. The strongest social force in temple life is the need of Chinese people to do right by their deceased family members. By participating in temple life, they gain access to a comprehensive system that attends to the dead systematically. The ancestral halls where spirit tablets of the deceased are enshrined are the most tangible objectification of filial piety, complemented by the chanting services that are organized at the time of death, anniversaries, and the annual cycle of feast days, especially the observance of the Qingming and Yulanpen Festivals. The Chinese Buddhist death rituals objectify and concretize Chinese family values.

The Buddhist temples provide an orderly way of venerating the dead and maintaining family ties across generations. When the Chinese participate in these rituals, they are drawn in to a second mechanism of sacralization: myth. Myths for Mol

not only interpret reality and provide a shorthand for basic personal and social experiences, but they also sacralize them. They provide the fitting contour for existence. They hold arbitrariness and chaos at bay, and they reinforce identity. (Ibid., 246)

The Chinese in the Philippines often encounter a Chinese Buddhist temple like any other Chinese temple, unable to distinguish one from the other, but the presence of a monastic community and the attention given to care of the dead is an entry point for the Chinese to express their identity. After becoming part of the temple community, the Buddhist worldview or “myth” is shared with them, and this involves karma, dependent origination, and the cycles of rebirth. They learn about the teachings of the Buddha, the promises of Amitābha, and soon they are practicing chanting and recitation, whether on their own or through the services organized by the temple.

Here the third mechanism becomes important: rites or rituals that “articulate and reiterate a system of meaning, and prevent it being lost from sight” (Ibid., 233). Especially as rites of passage in life and death, they “represent sameness in action and thereby consolidate the sameness of a system of meaning. They restore, reinforce, or redirect identity.” (Ibid.) The rituals of Chinese Buddhism

are not only for the purpose of praying for the dead, but with this as a key element, other rituals to pray for blessings and protection serve to keep the Chinese in the Chinese Buddhist community. The temple is a sociocultural link that expresses Chinese identity because not only are the dead cared for, but it is all done in the context of Chinese culture, using Chinese language, and following the Chinese calendrical cycle.

Through objectification, myth, and ritual, the Chinese are drawn to Chinese Buddhism because it sacralizes their identity, organizes time and space so as to give expression to Chinese values. To be sure, death rituals are not always the first point of contact that Chinese have with a Buddhist temple. There can be other access points, like the attraction to spiritual practice in a Chinese cultural context. Many of my informants did not begin their participation in temple life only when someone in the family died. They began participating during ordinary time, making offerings and chanting on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month, which are traditional worship days in Chinese religion. The beginning and end of each year is marked through temple practice. With all this done in Chinese and directed by a monastic community, the temples responded to the sociocultural need that Chinese people had to express their cultural and spiritual values. Interestingly, this follows the same pattern as the diffusion of Buddhism in China (Zürcher 1993, 14), as we saw in Chapter 3.

Finally, there is the mechanism of commitment, “focused emotion or emotional attachment to a specific focus of identity. It is an anchoring of the emotions in a salient system of meaning” (Ibid., 216).

In time, Chinese Buddhists anchor themselves in the Chinese Buddhist way of understanding the world and marking time. While there may be other social forces that attract them to other groups such as hometown or clan associations, the temple offers them a regularity of spiritual practice that makes it primary as a focus of Chinese identity. The monthly devotion days and feasts, not to mention the weekly practices, make Chinese Buddhist temples centers of Chinese identity and culture.

These mechanisms are closely linked and work best with elite Buddhists and new immigrants. On the popular level, especially for those who simultaneously participate in Buddhist and Christian services, the situation is more complex. For them, the Buddhist temple responds to the part of their selves that is Chinese, but Christian practice may be addressing other social forces such as the ties that bind

them to the Christian schools they attended.

The mechanisms for sacralization have a direct link to the Chinese sociocultural forces that attract people to Chinese Buddhism. Identities, however, have ethnic and religious dimensions, among others. How do the overseas Chinese manage these two dimensions?

Typologies of being Chinese, Filipino, and Buddhist

In the literature on Chinese identities in the diaspora, two essays (Wang L.L. 1991 and Chan K.B. 2004) stand out for the dynamic typologies of Chinese identity they proposed that help illuminate different ways of understanding identity. The idea of roots or gen dominates these typologies. Roots can refer to a variety of reference points: ancestral village, Chinese race, China as a nation, the Chinese government, or Chinese culture (Wang L.L. 1991, 184). These are not static identities. They interact with each other, overlap, conflict, or shift from one to the other, depending on circumstances and Chinese people's attitude to their roots.

These are also self-understandings that do not necessarily match reality. For example, the first typology is that of the classic sojourner (yeluoguigen) mentality. The Chinese characters mean "falling leaves return to their roots" and refer to the Chinese who have journeyed abroad to make a living or to settle temporarily, but at the end of their lives wish to return to China and be buried there. Even if the latter is not possible, they see themselves primordially as Chinese, in the fundamental sense described by Tong (2010, 4). Their Chinese race and culture make up their roots and their self-understanding.

The other four typologies are assimilation (zhancaochugen), pulling out the roots to eliminate the grass; accommodation (luodishenggen), sinking roots in the foreign land; ethnic pride (xungenwenzu), seeking one's roots both in the foreign country and in China; and being uprooted (shigenlizu), alienation due to loss of contact with one's roots.[7]

Except for the last typology which refers specifically to Chinese intellectuals exiled abroad, all these typologies can be applied to the Chinese in the Philippines. Those known as Filipino Chinese are associated with the sojourner mentality because of their strong sense of Chineseness. They just happen to be in the Philippines, and are also known as overseas Chinese or huaqiao, a term I introduced in the first chapter. The Chinese mestizos, as a result of intermarriage, have assimilated totally, sinking roots in the country and self-identifying as Filipinos. The Chinese Filipinos[8] have accommodated themselves to the country and taken on many Filipino ways of doing things, but still readily

acknowledge their Chinese heritage. Chinese Filipinos who have the consciousness to seek out their roots both in the Philippines and in China are ethnically proud. In Chinese, they are referred to as huaren.[9]

To these five typologies, Chan K.B. (2004) adds a sixth to describe the cosmopolitan ethnic Chinese of the 21st century. He calls it chonggen or multiple rootedness because Chinese in every place negotiate their Chinese identity. He describes this as

> the identity of the Chinese transilient, the new middle class, trans-national Chinese bourgeoisie … [who] has long since overcome or exorcise his desire to search for and sink roots back in ancestral China; he may or may not go back; he has a choice; he has always made efforts to strive for integration, without assimilation in whatever country of abode he happens to find himself; strictly speaking, he is not really experimenting with accommodation in the host society, either because he cannot see himself settling down and sinking his roots in any one single place or because his consciousness is not tied to one origin, one ethnicity, but to many, that is, a new ethnicity, each time, every time. (Chan K.B. 2004, 62)

Chan was writing about the Chinese in Thailand, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and noted that the global era has made it quite common for young urban Chinese to spend some years of their lives in different countries. When this happens, identities become more fluid and have to be positioned depending on the audience. Chinese-Filipino professionals who work in Singapore, Hong Kong, or North America belong to this typology.

These six typologies refer to a general sense of Chinese identity using the metaphor of roots. Adding the layer of religion, how might Chinese Buddhism figure as a marker of Chinese identity in relation to these typologies?

Stuart Chandler proposed typologies of being Chinese, American, and Buddhist and described the possible permutations in terms of grammar. The third word in each typology is the noun and the most important identity. The word before it is secondary in importance, and the first word is the least important part of the typology. Thus there could be a Buddhist Chinese American, someone whose

primary identity is American, but whose ancestry is Chinese and whose spiritual practice consists of visits to Buddhist temples several times a year. The American Chinese Buddhist is another possibility, used to describe someone who sees himself as basically Buddhist, but Chinese in ancestry and living in the United States. Chandler goes on to describe four other possible typologies. (Chandler 1998, 26)

The fundamental problem with Chandler's typologies is that they place ethnic categories (American, Chinese) on the same level as a religious category (Buddhist). Further, the two ethnic categories can be separated. The typologies then become unwieldy because religious and ethnic identities, while closely linked, are not necessarily put on the same level or projected simultaneously. If I were to apply Chandler's method to the Philippine experience, I would have the following typologies and their respective definitions:

Buddhist Filipino Chinese

Filipino Buddhist Chinese

Filipino Chinese Buddhist

Chinese Filipino Buddhist

Chinese Buddhist Filipino

Buddhist Chinese Filipino

These typologies are difficult to define because the ethnic categories of Filipino and Chinese are treated separately. In my view, they must essentially be taken together as a particular cultural identity. Recalling the positionality of identities (Cornell and Hartmann 2007, 58, 61),[10]a religious or ethnic/cultural identity is projected depending on the audience. In the case of the Philippines, I prefer to use the same logic of grammar as Chandler, but propose that ethnic categories must always go together as a cultural identity—the mix of Filipino and Chinese. The noun is the identity that is being projected to a particular audience. The adjective is simply descriptive rather than of less importance, as in Chandler's

typologies.

This way of understanding ethnic/cultural and religious identities follows the existing literature on the Chinese in the Philippines in describing ethnic identity (Ang-See 1997, 59). The Filipino Chinese are either new immigrants or the first generation to be born in the country, and therefore still see themselves as primarily Chinese who happen to be in the Philippines. The sojourner mentality may still characterize them.[11] The Chinese Filipino belongs to the third or later generation and after years of accommodation, already self-identifies as a Filipino of Chinese ancestry. These are new cultural identities, the fruit of greater or lesser interaction between ethnic Chinese and Filipino identities. These new identities are then linked to the religious identity, in this case Buddhist.

The Buddhist Filipino-Chinese has Chineseness as a primary referent, but lives in the Philippines and practices Buddhism. In this case, the sociocultural link is the social force that attracts him to the temples. Whether it is death rituals or regular spiritual practices that attract the Chinese, the temple becomes a cultural bastion for the new immigrants and their offspring. A second social force that may attract them to a particular temple is the geographical link to their native place, as in the case of temples that enshrine images from particular villages in Fujian. This is the case, for example, in smaller temples like the Kim Sha Temple and the Tian Tiok Am.[12]

The ethnic/cultural and religious identity terms are simply interchanged when it is religious identity that is being highlighted, e.g., Filipino-Chinese Buddhist. The definition remains the same but it is the religious identity that comes to the fore.

The Buddhist Chinese-Filipino is more integrated into Philippine society and sees himself as a Filipino of Chinese descent as a result of accommodation. His blood may be “pure” Chinese or he may be a mestizo, but having been born and raised in the Philippines and interacted to a deeper degree with the local population, there is less ambiguity about the Philippines as one’s own country. The attraction to Buddhism in this case is primarily spiritual practice rather than sociocultural or geographical links, although there can be ethnic pride in the Chineseness of Buddhism. When highlighting religious identity, such a person is referred to as a Chinese-Filipino Buddhist.

Under these typologies, two possibilities emerge. The Buddhist Filipino-Chinese

is the same as the Filipino-Chinese Buddhist, and the Buddhist Chinese-Filipino is the same as the Chinese-Filipino Buddhist. It is just a matter of which identity, ethnic/cultural or religious, is being highlighted. Again, it must be noted that the Buddhists referred to here are elite Buddhists. Why this is important will become apparent shortly.

To consider popular religion where there is practice of different Chinese religions and even Christianity, two more typologies can be added: the Filipino-Chinese Syncretist or Syncretist Filipino-Chinese, and the Chinese-Filipino Syncretist or Syncretist Chinese-Filipino. The ethnic/cultural identities are defined in the same way as above, but religiously, they practice elements of various Chinese religions, possibly with some Christian practices as well.

The effort to define identities is quite complex, but within these typologies, I would say that the majority of those who frequent the temples are Filipino-Chinese rather than Chinese-Filipino. My key informants were either born in China or had parents who were born in China, and they confirmed that most of the people who come to the temples are the same. This is also what I observed during my field visits. If this is the case, then it can be asked what role the Buddhist temples and other institutions played and still play in the cultural and ethnic discourse of the Chinese in the Philippines.

Role of Buddhist institutions in the cultural and ethnic discourse: Integration or isolation?

If, as I have judged, the elite devotees of Chinese Buddhist temples, at least at the time of writing, are mainly Filipino-Chinese or new immigrants, then temple life represents an early phase in the process of Chinese people finding a place in Philippine society. The temples are centers not only of Buddhism, but of Chinese culture as well. The sociocultural and geographical links attract the Filipino-Chinese to the temples, and these become places where Chinese ethnic identity is experienced and preserved. The temples are like the migrant churches that Mol says are “bastions of ethnic preservation” (1976, 174).

Individuals and families that still frequent a temple are either Chinese or Filipino-Chinese in their orientation. The primary referent in self-identity is still Chineseness. This may change in the temples that are actively reaching out to a non-Chinese speaking audience, but most of the temples are still serving a Chinese clientele, as evidenced by the use of Mandarin or Hokkien in all activities. It must not be concluded, however, that the temples have a hidden agenda to create ethnic ghettoes, only that Chinese Buddhist practice contributes to a deeper sense of being Chinese.

In the national survey mentioned earlier, only two percent of the Chinese population claimed to be Buddhist (Ang-See 1997, 57). At that time (1995), the Chinese population of the Philippines was estimated at 850,000. By conservative estimates allowing for some proportional growth, there are less than 20,000 “Buddhists” in the Philippines. It is important to remember that most Chinese who actually practice Chinese folk religion rather than formal Buddhism would self-identify as Buddhists, as I have observed in ordinary discourse.

Narrowing the focus to the elite Buddhists of the Philippines, defined as those who participate in temple activities at least twice a month, I would say that there are only a few hundred Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines. The rest are syncretists who come only occasionally to mark special events, like offering services for the dead or invoking blessings for the beginning of a new year.

In contrast, I know from my own experience and priestly ministry that a Chinese-Filipino Catholic family would basically follow Catholic practice in the

milestones of life and in their weekly religious practice. They may attend a Chinese Catholic parish, but there would be very little by way of Chinese cultural practices that become part of their ordinary observances. When there is a death in the family, some family elders may prescribe Buddhist or Chinese folk customs, but these would be observed out of deference to the elders rather than religious conviction. This demonstrates that for the Chinese-Filipino Catholic, religion has a weaker link to Chinese identity because Chinese rituals are seen as the Chinese way to care for the dead. Catholic services are not considered Chinese.

As far as Chinese identity is concerned, Chinese Buddhist schools probably have less impact than the temples. As we saw in Chapter 5, the schools do not have the objective of converting their students. Buddhism is taught for one hour or less each week, visits to the temple are very rare, and devotional practices are limited to brief chants. Majority of the students in the schools are in fact baptized Christians. Therefore, the ethnic/cultural identities of the Chinese studying at Chinese Buddhist schools are more diverse. By studying in a Chinese school, they are comfortable with maintaining some degree of Chinese identity. They may be Filipino-Chinese or Chinese-Filipino in orientation, but the school's Buddhist environment does not necessarily push them toward one or the other. Other factors such as their families' actual religious practice, language spoken at home, and so on, come into play to determine their cultural identity.

Chinese Buddhist charitable organizations have a perceptible Chinese identity, but because they serve a non-Chinese clientele, they actually are venues for greater interaction with non-Chinese Filipinos. This experience may highlight differences, or it may hasten the process of integration. Differences are highlighted when negative stereotypes about Filipinos are reinforced, and the Chinese conclude that Chinese culture is superior. For example, one of the volunteers at a Buddhist charity clinic told me that medicines for chronic illnesses are dispensed to the "hoa-na" (fanzi)[13] on a weekly basis because if more than a week's supply is given, the poor might sell the medicines for easy cash. This could very well be true, but in the description of the situation, an ethnic line is drawn between "us" and "them." When this is the case then, Filipino-Chinese identity is highlighted.

On the other hand, integration can be promoted if the reaction of the Chinese is to realize the extent of social problems in the Philippines and a desire is nurtured to improve the situation of Filipinos and the Philippines. I would judge the latter

to be the case among the volunteers of the modern movements like Tzu Chi or Foguangshan. Chinese Buddhist charitable organizations, like the schools, are therefore more open-ended in the kind of cultural identity that the Chinese form through participation in their activities. They can highlight their Chineseness and emphasize how different they are from the Filipinos, or they can empathize with the local population and see themselves as Filipinos who share the same burden to improve the situation in the country.

The way Chinese Buddhism has adapted to the Philippine context and its role as a marker of Chinese identity raises questions about the nature of Chinese Buddhism and its future in the Philippines. If Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines can be practiced following Christian patterns of temporality, and if syncretism is part of the experience, where are the lines drawn? How far can Chinese Buddhist practices be adapted to foreign contexts without sacrificing its own integrity as a Buddhist religion?

What picture emerges? Evaluating the religious, cultural, and social impact of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines

In a country where the ethnic Chinese comprise only one percent of the population, majority of whom are officially Christian in religious affiliation, the sociological role of Chinese Buddhism is quite significant. For the first two generations of Chinese immigrants, and for later generations who simultaneously practiced elements of both Buddhism and Christianity, the religious, social, and cultural life organized around Buddhist temple communities helped to provide a strong link to Chinese civilization and identity. A South Fujianese subethnic identity was also clearly discernible in the lingua franca of the community and the links to people and institutions in South Fujian.

There may be very few Chinese in the Philippines who consider themselves exclusively Buddhist as far as religion is concerned, but the Chinese religious culture of the country allows the Buddhist community to support thirty-seven formally Buddhist temples, seven schools, eight charity clinics, and various other programs and activities. The people behind these institutions are not always purely Buddhist in their spiritual practice as evidenced by the practicalities of organizing Buddhist religious services, the syncretic amity between Guanyin and the Virgin Mary, and different forms of syncretism that are at play. But they are firmly linked to the Great Tradition of Chinese Buddhism as it developed in China and Taiwan. No matter how simplified or abbreviated the chanting may be, these and other practices are still rooted in Pure Land and Chan traditions that originated in China.

The Buddhist elite is indeed very small in number, but for the Chinese Buddhists of the Philippines, neither size nor exclusive affiliation are the most important factors in evaluating the importance and influence of the Buddhist community. The different modalities of doing religion that Chau (2011b, 67–84) has identified for Chinese religion—discursive/spiritual, personal-cultivational, liturgical, immediate-practical, relational—can all be found among the Chinese Buddhists of the Philippines.

Some institutions may be in decline due to a failure to adapt further to the contemporary situation, but at the very least, temples and schools continue to be

icons of Chinese and Buddhist presence in the country. Their programs preserve and transmit Chinese Buddhist culture for younger generations and for new immigrants. They have small but stable structures that remind the community of its Buddhist legacy, brought about by the specific blend of causes and conditions that made them possible in the first place. My informants told me, as insiders using typically Buddhist language, that new causes and conditions will pave the way for the future of Chinese Buddhism in the country. As I have indicated at the end of Chapter 2, temples may rely on new immigrants from China, merge with one another, or be reorganized by Buddhist groups from Taiwan. There is also a growing trend to propagate Buddhism beyond the Chinese community.

Seeing how Chinese Buddhism adapted to local conditions gives rise to the question of the nature of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines. How strong is its link to orthodox Chinese Buddhism as found in Chinese societies like mainland China or Taiwan? Given its dynamic capacity to adapt to new conditions, and its soft approach to proselytizing and pursuing religious conversions, what kind of religious identity does it promote? In grammatical terms, is Buddhism finally an adjective to describe special groups of people, or is it a noun that describes an essential identity?

The nature of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines

Orthodoxy and adaptation

While the Chinese Buddhisms of the overseas Chinese have a common origin in China, each one develops uniquely as the tradition adapts to local conditions. The Philippine temples have become independent of their origins in China, although sentimental relations are maintained. In the case of the communities originating in Taiwan, which are more centralized, the link is not only affective, but functional as well. The strategies of Foguangshan, Tzu Chi, and Zhongtaishan, are adapted to local conditions but also aligned with the general strategy of their headquarters in Taiwan.

Boyarin's (2004) analysis of how Judaism and Christianity came to be distinct religions is helpful in considering the links of diaspora Chinese Buddhism to the contexts in which they developed.

The Stammbaum (family tree) theory in linguistics posits a common origin that gives birth to different languages. In contrast, wave theory says that linguistic similarity may be the product of convergence of different dialects spoken in contiguous areas. Dialects are not strictly bounded and differentiated from each other but instead shade one into the other. Innovations at any one point spread like the waves created when a stone is thrown into a pond, intersecting with other such waves produced in other places and leading to observable patterns of differentiation and similarity (Boyarin 2004, 18).

The family tree model corresponds to descriptions of the history of Judaism and Christianity as a "parting of the ways." The theory assumes that all that is shared between the two is due to common origins, but the wave theory model leads us to think of much more fluid and not strictly defined borders on the ground, with partitioning taking place well above the ground. In postcolonial terms, Boyarin (Ibid.) imagines a contact zone or space of transculturation where cultures meet, clash, grapple with one another, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.

Applying these ideas to Chinese Buddhists overseas, their demographic profile in each country, and the nation's dominant religion are very significant factors that affected the way Chinese Buddhism could develop. In the Philippines, the prevailing Christian environment has resulted in a syncretic form of popular

Chinese Buddhism that highlights its similarities with popular Catholicism.

In each diaspora community, Chinese Buddhism develops asymmetrically, always adapting to local conditions. Reflecting on my fieldwork data, I can see Chinese Buddhism as one stone thrown into the pond of the Chinese community, but whose waves intersect with the waves created by the stones of other Chinese religions and of Catholic Christianity. The similarities and differences can be understood in this way, and explain the syncretism that can be observed on the popular level, such as the syncretic amity between Guanyin and the Virgin Mary. The rituals of both traditions respond to similar if not the same deeply held desires and values. Given the tolerance for syncretism of the religious authorities on both sides, it becomes sensible to practice elements of both religions on the popular level. These various waves make up the Chinese religious culture of the Philippines.

Among elite Buddhists, the movement is different. It is not towards syncretism, but toward fidelity to the Buddhist path, and purification of the superstitious elements from Chinese religions. The wave theory is also helpful here, because of the history of orthodoxy in Chinese Buddhism. As Buddhism adapted to China, it had to confront the prevailing values in Chinese culture and the ways in which Confucian and Daoist ritual already responded to these. Hu Shih,[14] an intellectual of the 20th century May Fourth movement in China, identified five aspects of Indian Buddhism that conflicted with Chinese values and had to be resolved to allow Buddhism to survive in the Chinese setting. Park (2012) has also demonstrated that from its beginnings in China, Buddhism had to be translated using existing Chinese idioms even if these appeared to contradict Buddhist teachings. I considered these in Chapter 3 when I discussed the process of Buddhism's sinification. This process demonstrates the immense adaptability of Buddhism, and is the same quality that is operative in the adaptation of Chinese Buddhism to the Philippines, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Earlier, I used the Great and Little Traditions as a device to differentiate Chinese Buddhism from its adaptation in the Philippines, but when does adaptation give birth to a new synthesis, and when is it still a manifestation of Chinese Buddhism?

Here the debate between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, starting with Watson's (1985) classic work on the topic, is quite helpful. Using the cult of Tianhou , a Chinese goddess, Watson argued that in late imperial China, the state's objective

of cultural integration was aided by the standardization of the deities to be worshipped, and the structures by which this worship was to be carried out. Beliefs were not legislated; the symbols were. The meanings people attached to deities such as Tianhou were many and varied, but this diversity could be accommodated as long as temple practice became the mark of civilized society, respectability, and a unified culture. He contrasted this with the European view that achieved standardization through orthodoxy, i.e., commonly held beliefs.

Chinese Buddhist culture in the Philippines no doubt contributed to a stronger sense of Chinese identity, and perhaps the same could be said of other Chinese religious traditions that can be found in the country. If, as Watson says, orthopraxy results in cultural integration, then the practice of Chinese Buddhism at whatever level gives the Chinese an experience of being Chinese. It is a very significant link to cultural identity.

The scholarly responses to Watson, however, have challenged the view that orthopraxy was the key to cultural integration. It has been argued that some degree of orthodoxy was also necessary, for example in the sharing of common values like honoring parents and repaying moral debts (Sangren 1987; Oxfeld 2004; Pomeranz 2007; Brown 2007).

In the Philippine case of Chinese Buddhism, there is no need to choose one over the other as the marker of cultural integration. Both beliefs and practices played their part in producing an experience of Chinese identity. Chinese death rituals, for example, can be carried out in a variety of contexts (Buddhist, Daoist, Christian), but it is basically motivated by the value of honoring parents that extends beyond the grave, and certain beliefs about the afterlife. These beliefs may vary significantly, but the important thing is that the living must carry out rituals to look after the afterlife of their deceased loved ones. This indicates a general orthodoxy in the belief in an afterlife, but also great diversity in the practice.

The temple communities I studied can still be described as Chinese Buddhist. The blend of beliefs and practices that I witnessed, including the syncretic elements, are all still subsumed under Chinese Buddhism. The efforts at achieving a new synthesis that can be called Filipino Buddhism are only just beginning.

Chinese Buddhism, in its unique adaptation to the Philippines, has played a role

as a marker of Chinese ethnic identity. What kind of religious identity is engendered by Chinese Buddhism? By analyzing the predominantly pragmatic approach of Chinese Buddhism, specifically its attitude to proselytizing and religious conversions, I propose that on the popular level, Buddhism in the Philippines is a fluid rather than essential religious identity.

Religious identity: Dual belonging?

There are two basic levels of practice in the Buddhist temples of the Philippines. The vast majority of temple visitors practice popular Buddhism, characterized by going to the temple, lighting incense, making offerings and praying for personal intentions. At this level, there is a great deal of syncretism with other Chinese religions or with Catholicism. Then there is an elite level of practice, characterized by the practice of meditation, a distaste for elaborate rituals, and commitment to private and communal study of Buddhist teachings.

Both levels of practice are helpful in preserving Chinese ethnic identity, but the matter of religious identity is more complex. Most of the lay informants[15] I interviewed were elite Buddhists who came from families that originally practiced popular Buddhism, and did not receive Christian baptism even if they attended Christian schools. They were secure in their Buddhist identity and saw themselves as deepening the practices they inherited from their parents. All were university-educated and learned about Buddhism through self-study and interaction with monastics.

Those who practice Buddhism at the popular level have a more fluid religious identity. Most of them are baptized Catholics, but for various reasons, find themselves practicing more Buddhism than Catholicism, although they are not averse to participating in Catholic rituals as well. This kind of syncretism is simply the simultaneous practice of elements of different religions, rather than the open-ended process that I described in Chapter 4, where there is a movement toward a resolution between the different faiths. In popular syncretic Buddhism, no resolution is needed because of the mindset that seeks to integrate rather than differentiate. Buddhists see no problem with Catholics who want to practice some form of Buddhism. The monk Daoyuan told me:

The early immigrants were Chinese and Buddhist, but over time, the families also became Daoist, Catholic, or Protestant. The Catholics could continue participating in Daoism or Buddhism, but not the Protestants. Catholics are more open and do not see any conflict so they still go to church and come to the temple, and in this way they are able to preserve their culture. [16]

SO, a lay Buddhist who organizes a weekly meditation class, finds comfort in the words of a Buddhist master who looks positively upon Catholicism. SO said to me:

My master Chin Kung[17] says he would pay respects to Jesus and the Catholic saints because they are also bodhisattvas, leading others to holiness. Buddhism does not discriminate against other religions.[18]

Alfredo Co, who teaches Chinese and Asian philosophy at Manila's University of Sto. Tomas, is a Catholic, but his family elders practiced Buddhism. He explains the syncretism of Chinese Filipinos in this way:

In Western tradition we always see that the historical development of ideas is very dialectical. An idea is born, it is denied by a new one, and then a new synthesis comes … but that is not the oriental mindset. The oriental mindset is synthetical, they don't find contradiction because they tend to look at reality in terms of what we call harmonious coexistence, union of opposites, merging of thoughts, ah, the oneness of reality, all of this seems very pervasive in the Chinese … it comes with the mindset.

Time will judge how valuable that kind of syncretism will be. It's in flux. We are all experimenting with it, including religion … That's the event. The contemporary event of technology puts us into contact and we only see the visible, the sensible; it will take the wise men of our age to cogitate about these phenomena. And what will emerge from it.[19]

Catholic authorities have largely remained silent about the syncretism of Chinese Filipinos. There have been no documents or pronouncements on the issue, although the phenomenon is well known to the clergy who work with Chinese Catholics.[20] Because of the oriental mindset that Co invokes and which is

supported by other studies of Chinese religions (Wong 2011, 161; Paper 1994, 1–50; Poceski 2009, 166), many Chinese see no need to attach themselves exclusively to one religious path. Many remain syncretists for whom conversion is not a necessity. One of my informants grew up in a Buddhist household, but married a Catholic and happily had herself baptized so that they could have a Catholic wedding ceremony. Her spiritual practice, however, has leaned toward Buddhism. She is a volunteer administrator at one of the modern temples, and makes the following observation:

Here in the Philippines, I would say that the upper class, because they are better educated and reflect more deeply, like to come and learn more about Buddhism. Whenever groups come, I tell them not to be afraid, we are not here to convert them. We are here to share with each other.[21]

Conversion is not a stated goal of the Chinese Buddhists I encountered. Whenever I raised this concern, I was told that it is an individual journey and it all depends on affinity.[22] The Buddhists just invite people to learn something of Buddhism, participate in their activities, and the rest is left to the person.

SG, who was raised in a temple run by caigu and studied at the Philippine Academy of Sakya, says:

With regard to the Chinese Filipinos, the younger generations have become syncretists or have totally left Buddhism. Personally, a lot of my friends are syncretists. I respect their practice, and I don’t hold it against them. I believe becoming a Buddhist depends a lot on affinity.[23]

Given this situation of fluidity in the religious identity of Chinese Filipinos who practice popular Buddhism along with Catholicism, neither can be considered an essential identity for the subjects. This pragmatic approach to religion is rationalized through the idea that all religions advocate the doing of good deeds and loving one’s neighbor, and therefore practicing different religious traditions

in the Philippine context is not a problem. Not all Chinese share this pragmatism. Some of the elite Buddhists would prefer that people stick to one path.

CLS, the Sunday School coordinator featured in Chapter 5, has this to say:

There's a joke that if you practice so many religions, believing in the Catholic God, the Buddha, Jesus of the Protestants; when you die they will all be there to take you and you won't know who to go with … so best to go where your parents are.[24]

While it is totally understandable that purists would prefer fidelity to one spiritual path, some form of belonging to different religions is already a phenomenon in the contemporary world. The Catholic theologian Peter Phan acknowledges that multiple or double belonging to religions is a problem only for faiths that demand the "absolute and exclusive commitment" of their adherents, and he names Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as examples of such faiths (Phan 2004, 62). In many parts of Asia, and I might add in diaspora communities, Phan says that "multiple religious belonging is the rule rather than the exception" (Ibid.). People practice elements of different religious traditions depending on their needs at different stages of life. Evidence from the practice of religion in contemporary China also supports the phenomenon of multiple belonging, as Goossaert has noted.[25]

Co, Phan, and Goossaert confirm what I have observed among the Chinese in the Philippines: that Chinese people who convert to Catholicism do not see this move as a necessary disengagement from Buddhism or the Chinese religions. Outside the Philippine context, the possibility of dual belonging has been the subject of deep theological reflection by Catholic specialists who are secure in their Christianity but have spent much time and effort in studying and experiencing other religious traditions (Phan 2004, 60–81).

The key fact here is that the maverick Catholics who claim dual belonging, who call themselves Buddhist Christians, are elite practitioners, often theologians. On the popular level, what can be observed is syncretism. Rituals and practices of both traditions are observed, without necessarily having a firm grounding in the

doctrinal foundations of either.

I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of JT and other Buddhists who say that it is not their aim to convert anyone to Buddhism. Recalling the synthetic Asian mindset mentioned by Co, and the fact of multiple belonging that Phan and Goossaert recognize, it is perfectly reasonable for Chinese Buddhists to say that they are not out to convert anyone. Maintaining a syncretic religious identity is not a problem for the Buddhists. It is the normal mode of things.

In the end, what can be found in the Philippines are elite Buddhists who prefer an exclusive adherence to Buddhism, but who respect the syncretism observed on the popular level. Those who practice the latter have a fluid religious identity and are examples of dual (Buddhism and Christianity) or multiple (Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, etc.) belonging, albeit only on the syncretic level. At this level, both Buddhism and Catholicism are adjectives or reference points for a fluid religious identity that highlights one or the other depending on the context.

Non-essentialist nouns

In thinking about religious identities, the typologies introduced earlier point us to a simple theory where ethnic and religious identities are simultaneously projected, but where the noun indicates the identity that is being highlighted. It is possible to be a Buddhist Filipino-Chinese or Filipino-Chinese Buddhist, as against a Buddhist Chinese-Filipino or a Chinese-Filipino Buddhist. Ethnic or religious identity is highlighted depending on the context.

When the discourse is confined to religious identity, what are the possibilities for Buddhists in the Philippines? Elite Buddhists refer to themselves simply as Buddhists, but on the popular level, those who combine religions can refer to themselves as Buddhist Catholics or Catholic Buddhists. Neither are essential religious identities. I am not referring to the official religious affiliation indicated in census forms, in which case majority of the people I have encountered would be considered Catholics. I am thinking about lived religion, the actual practice of religion in daily life. I propose that the vast majority of Buddhist devotees in the temples of the Philippines have fluid religious identities. They project the religious identity that is appropriate to the situation they face. This is in stark contrast to the great numbers of Filipinos for whom the Catholic faith is a substantial component of their identity.[26]

In social life, Chinese Buddhists have their children baptized as Catholics in their infancy. Weddings are held in Christian churches. Funerals welcome the ritual services of Catholics, Protestants, and Buddhists. No one turns this phenomenon into a problem, not even the Catholic and Protestant authorities who are well aware of it and who may have doctrinal reasons against it.

Buddhism is a non-essential, i.e., fluid identity for most of the Chinese people I encountered in the Philippines. For that matter, so is Catholicism. Both form significant parts of their religious practice, but neither is practiced exclusively. Some prefer Buddhism because of its other function as a link to Chinese culture and identity. Many practice Catholicism as well because of its social functions in the Philippines.

To say that neither Buddhism nor Catholicism are essential religious identities for many ethnic Chinese in the Philippines is not to say that they are in any way

superficial believers. They are like most Chinese around the world, belonging to a complex Chinese religious culture that is, by nature, diverse in content and practice. Only those who proceed from a Western Christian viewpoint that expects only one religious affiliation would see this as a problem.[27]

The social context of Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines led it to extend its diversity to include Catholicism. The resulting religious culture made possible the creation of many networks of social relationships among the Chinese, and between them and the Filipinos. That religion, particularly Buddhism, is utilized for social reasons is perhaps most evident in the case of contemporary Indian Buddhists associated with BR Ambedkar. In fighting for the emancipation of his native Mahar (so-called untouchable) caste, he converted to Buddhism in 1956 and thousands of Mahars followed suit (Beltz 2005) in the hope of securing a new beginning for their people. This is a case of a religion subsuming the local ethnic identity for purposes of social advancement.

There is also evidence from Southeast Asia that shows how religion and ethnicity have combined to strengthen a minority identity. For example, there are the Dayak Christians in the highlands of Indonesia (Connolly 2009) for whom religion became the pathway to assert their ethnic identity as Dayaks. In another context, the Tibetan, Han, and Hui believers in the Huanglong region of Sichuan studied by Sutton and Kang (2009) are examples of indigenous ethno-religious identity being preserved for political and commercial purposes.

On the popular level, Chinese minorities in Southeast Asia have a special way of utilizing religion for social purposes. Religious identities could be shaped and reshaped to fit new realities because they were fluid rather than essential. Chinese religions could be subsumed under Buddhism in Indonesia, and then assert distinct identities again once the political situation allowed it. Chinese Buddhists in Malaysia and Singapore could become non-sectarian and associational, and Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines could incorporate Chinese folk practices and Catholicism into their Buddhism. These are all examples of the interplay between religion and ethnicity that scholars have begun acknowledging in recent years (Mitchell 2006).

The data on Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines is evidence of the fluid nature of popular Chinese Buddhism, and by extension, Chinese religion. That these traditions are syncretic is commonplace. The pragmatic Chinese attitude to religion would seem to include rather than exclude, but that this expansiveness

can include an exclusivist faith like Catholicism, albeit only on the popular level, is the special highlight that this book has contributed.

Chinese Buddhists in the Philippines are “marginal.” I mean this in several senses. They are marginal first because the Chinese themselves are numerically marginal. They are a minority in the Philippines, making up only one percent of the population, as noted earlier. The formal religious affiliation of this minority is Christian, so the Buddhists are once again marginal in terms of numbers.[28] Numbers, however, can deceive. There is a rich Chinese religious culture in the Philippines, as evidenced by the vibrant Buddhist, Daoist, and folk temple communities. Within this complex Chinese religious culture, a very small number are elite Buddhists, making them even more marginal within the Chinese community.

What has become apparent is that Chinese Buddhists are marginal against different centers—the Philippine population as a whole, the formal religious profile of the Chinese community, and even within the Chinese religious field. The marginality experienced at several levels once again indicates the fluidity of identities.

In the end, we must return to the question of religion in Chinese identity. I have hopefully shown that Chinese Buddhism in the Philippines has played its part as an ethnic identity marker. Can the limited evidence offered allow us to say something more about the place of religion in constructions of Chinese identity?

1 For a brief description of Yiguandao and further references about the sect, see Note 27 in Chapter 3.

2 I visited the Kiu Pat Temple and the Chinese caretaker told me about the links among these three temples.

3 Just to provide a brief backgrounder on these deities: Baogong refers to the Song dynasty judge who is revered for his wise judgment and thus became the symbol for justice. Baosheng Dadi was a physician also from the Song

dynasty and is a Daoist god of healing. Yaochi Jinmu is the Daoist name for the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu), an ancient female goddess. For a case study on Baosheng Dadi's cult in Fujian, see Chapter 2 of Dean (1993).

4 Their literature refers to their religion as Zhongjiao , literally the "Bell Religion," but in spoken Chinese they refer to the place as the Jigong Temple (Jigong Tan). I visited the Bell Church in Baguio in April 2011 and spoke at some length to the Chinese caretaker. Jigong was a Chan Buddhist monk during the Song dynasty and was considered a "Living Buddha." He became a folk hero and eventually became popular with Daoists who invoked him for advice on worldly affairs.

5 Teresita Ang-See and I have cowritten an article on the Chinese religious culture of the Philippines where we describe many of the non-Buddhist and syncretic Chinese temples in the Philippines. See Dy and Ang-See (2015).

6 While my fieldwork is limited to Buddhist temples in an overseas Chinese community, Feuchtwang and Lagerwey are making more universal observations about Chinese religions. Some of these are discernible in the temples I have observed, for example, the role of Buddhist monastics as providers of systematic death rituals transformed the religious life of the Chinese. I discussed this in the conclusion to Chapter 4 when I described the relationship between lay and monastic Buddhism in the Philippines. My focus on Chinese identity and discussion of Mol's mechanisms of sacralization (as follows) support the larger studies of scholars such as Feuchtwang and Lagerwey in detailing the role of temples in Chinese society.

It is also worth noting that my work on Chinese Buddhism in the context of overseas Chinese communities is very different from the role that Buddhism has played in Theravada Buddhist countries where Buddhism has become linked to political identity. Abeysekara (2002) and Obeyesekere (2003) have studied Buddhist political identity in Sri Lanka, and McCargo (2009) has done so for the

Thai context.

7 See Wang L.L. (1991) for a detailed elaboration of these typologies. He writes in the Chinese-American context but says that some of these typologies also apply to the Chinese in Southeast Asia (Wang L.L. 1991, 184). I think they are all applicable, except for the last typology which characterizes the Chinese intellectuals who found a niche for their self-expression in the West.

8 Chinese Filipinos are also known colloquially as Chinoys or Tsinoys, a combination of Chino or Tsino with Pinoy, the latter being a colloquial term for Filipinos. Tsinoy was popularized by Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran (Unity for Progess), which has been advocating the integration of the Chinese into Philippine society since the 1970s.

9 I also introduced this term in the first chapter.

10 The authors use the term circumstantialism to indicate the fluidity of identities, as against primordialism that implies attachment to essential identities. Circumstantialism considers the context in which people are put in particular positions, and appropriate identities are then projected.

11 Wang Gungwu's (2008) typologies of Chinese diasporic cultures refer to this group as "the faithful."

12 See entries in Chapter 2.

13 This is a Hokkien term used to refer to Filipinos. Its literal meaning is “barbarian” and has a pejorative connotation (Chu 2010, 2). Today, it has lost some of its derogatory tone, but is still a largely negative term.

14 Hu Shih (1937, 219, cited in Lozada 2001, 35).

15 I conducted about forty focused interviews of varying quality, both of monastics and lay Buddhists.

16 Interview on 5 August 2010.

17 Master Chin Kung (Jingkong, b. 1927) is a monk in Taipei who promotes Pure Land teachings around Southeast Asia and North America. His groups go by various names, such as Amitabha Societies or Pure Land Learning Centers.

18 Interview on 5 February 2011.

19 Interview on 9 December 2010.

20 I am included in this group and the matter of syncretism has been periodically discussed in meetings of the Catholic Chinese-Filipino Apostolate that I attended between 2000 and 2008.

21 Interview with JT on 14 April 2011.

22 This was discussed in Chapter 5.

23 Email interview in January 2011.

24 Interview on 3 October 2010.

25 Writing about the social organization of Chinese religion in the 20th century, he says that “no Chinese polity has reliable official figures on religious affiliation, even though social surveys in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore do provide rather detailed pictures of the situation there” (Goossaert 2011, 187). The phenomenon of multiple belonging is the reason why attempts to categorize practitioners of Chinese religion and assign them to only one tradition do not reflect the realities of Chinese religious life.

26 It must be remembered, however, that the Filipino encounter with Catholicism has unfolded over close to five centuries, whereas the interaction between institutional Chinese Buddhism and Philippine Catholicism began only in the 20th century.

27 I will discuss this at greater length in the Conclusion, but it is worth noting that as early as the late 19th century, Rhys-Davids (1887, 4), considered one of the founders of modern Buddhist Studies who also wrote under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, already observed the fluidity of Buddhist identity, especially in China.

28 Sharon Suh (2004) has studied the Korean American Buddhist

community as a minority in a Christian country, but there is no evidence of syncretism with Christianity and her approach focuses on informants' use of Buddhist discourse to make sense of gender and community issues.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this book, I demonstrated how the literature on the Chinese in the Philippines indicated that religion is not a marker of Chinese identity because majority of the Chinese had converted to Christianity and syncretized this with Chinese religions such as Buddhism and Daoism (Tong 2010, 226–227). Others gave examples of syncretism and described it only as the blending of Chinese and Filipino ritual practices (Ang-See and Go 1990). To achieve the goal of maintaining Chinese identity, language, education, and culture programs were identified as the primary methods. Chinese religions were mentioned only as part of culture, and were not considered a distinct identity marker because of widespread syncretism.

At the end of this study, however, I think it is clear that syncretism, as part of the Chinese religious mindset, is precisely what makes it a marker of Chinese identity. According to one line of thought, Chineseness has not been identified with one particular religion because there are at least three Chinese religions, and except for elite practitioners, most Chinese practice a mix of these along with the traditional veneration of ancestors. This is the traditional understanding of Chinese religion as a broad category, but we have seen the inadequacies of such an approach. In the Philippine case, the syncretism of Chinese religions has been expanded to include Catholic Christianity. Therefore, some do not see religion as a marker of Chinese identity because Chineseness cannot be identified with one particular religion. I suspect that part of the reason for this way of thinking is an understanding of religion that privileges monotheism and exclusive adherence.[1]

In contrast, I would argue that the Chinese religious sense is similar to Reader and Tanabe's (1998) description of Japanese religions as transactional and focused on "this-worldly" benefits. While Japanese religions may be more focused on superstition and magic, and the content of the Chinese religious sense may vary within itself, this sense is characterized by an openness to multiple religious belonging, the expression of filial piety, transactions with a cosmic bureaucracy, and practical benefits in the present life. This characterization may not apply universally to Chinese religious practice, but this may be due more to political contexts where it has not been possible to claim multiple belonging.[2]

Multiple religious belonging has been observed in Chinese religions historically. People freely practiced elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, along with earlier practices of divination and ancestor worship (Feuchtwang 1991; Goossaert 2011, 187–189), notwithstanding periods of sectarianism in Chinese history when specific traditions sought to assert a unique identity.[3] The Chinese overseas tended to carry on with this practice, at times subsuming the variety of religious practice under the label of Buddhism, as was the case in Indonesia. In the Philippines, it is the case among the majority of Chinese who are officially Catholics but continue to practice some form of Chinese Buddhism (the so-called Buddhist Catholics).

A major concern in the practice of any Chinese religion is to extend the honor due to parents by looking after their souls after death. Death rituals make up a large portion of Buddhist devotional life, as evidenced by significant temple rituals for funerary services, the Yulanpen Festival in the lunar seventh month, and the maintenance of ancestral halls. In the Catholic practices of the Philippines, there is also an elaborate series of services to pray for the dead, such as Masses said for nine days after death, on the 40th day, and every year afterward, not to mention the month of November being dedicated to praying for the dead. In present-day China, despite the Communist government's modernization of death rituals, these have continued to remain vibrant and show every sign of being preserved (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 224–238).

Whatever form the religious practice takes, the relationship with the supernatural has a transactional nature. Rituals performed correctly and in the right number, whether sutra chanting, liberating animals, or offering Masses and novenas, are believed to earn merit and result in blessings not only for the dead, but for the living who carry out the rituals as well. These rituals can be addressed to a wide range of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Daoist deities, and the Christian God, imploring safe passage and eternal bliss for the deceased.

Part of the motivation for performing death rituals is the belief that failure to do so may result in misfortune for the descendants of the deceased (Yao and Zhao 2010, 114). Therefore, carrying out death rituals properly has the effect not only of gaining blessings, but avoiding misfortune as well.

I have found this characterization of the Chinese religious sense true of the overseas Chinese community that I studied. It could very well be true in other diaspora communities and in Chinese religion in general, but it is beyond the

scope of this book to make a more universal claim. My interest is only to make the modest claim that the syncretic nature of Chinese religiosity is a potent marker of Chinese identity. Thus, whether a group of Chinese people practices Chinese religion, a mix of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, or a mix of these along with folk practices and other religious practices native to their particular locale, such practice is still rooted in Chinese religion and Chinese religiosity, and hence makes it an important marker of Chinese identity.

Many scholars have theorized Chinese religion[4] without succumbing to the temptation of using Western categories to evaluate it, but few have linked Chinese religion to conceptions of Chineseness or explored their place in Chinese civilization. Part of the reason for this is that the history of the concept of religion in East and Southeast Asia is relatively young, and this in turn is linked to the Eurocentrism that has until recently characterized academic discourse about these regions, especially China.

In ReOrient, A.G. Frank (1998) debunks received scholarship that presented China and the Orient as lagging behind Europe in economic development. In fact, Frank cites substantial evidence that before 1800 Asia was at the center of a world economy that predated contemporary assertions of globalization and was superior to the European economy. Drawing from histories of production, trade, and maritime travel, Frank contributes to the articulation of Western prejudices against Asian realities that led to the justification of colonialism.

Religion was not spared from Western prejudice. Christianity was part of the Eurocentric worldview and saw the conversion of “pagans” as its mission. Non-Christian religions were judged according to Christian >norms, chief of them being monotheism.[5] It is thus easy to understand why the diverse deities of Chinese religions and the possibility of multiple religious belonging could easily be dismissed by the Christian hegemony as inferior to the Christian model.

Asian religions must be understood on their own terms rather than using Western, Eurocentric, Christian categories.[6] With regard to religious identities, these are much more fluid than in the Christian case. Even if there have been historical situations when Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism drew sectarian lines and tried to differentiate themselves from each other, on the whole, especially on the popular level, Chinese people practiced multiple belonging. This is why scholarship in the last twenty-five years has highlighted Chinese religious cultures, rather than the strict orthodoxies of Chinese religions (Bell

1989).

A Chinese religious culture develops in each Chinese context. This culture has common values such as honoring parents, the importance of the family, and belief in the efficacy of sacred times and places. As well, there is diversity in the interpretive content of beliefs and values, and the forms these take in ritual life. Beliefs and practices can be described for convenience as Great or Little, elite or popular, but such dichotomies are never absolute.

It is tempting to think of Chineseness, Chinese culture, or Chinese civilization as something fixed and shared by Chinese people all over the world and across history. Surely there are enduring values such as family-centeredness, devotion to parents, and a concern for cosmic order, but there is great diversity in their expression. Political, economic, and social factors come into play.

In this book, I have focused on the religious dimension of Chinese identity, and tried to demonstrate how Chinese religious cultures are strong markers of Chinese identity. In the Philippines, this religious culture is characterized by syncretism on the popular level, one that is open and flexible enough to include Catholicism.

Tu Weiming (1994) explores the changing meaning of being Chinese in the contemporary world. He introduced the idea of Cultural China and distinguishes Chinese geopolitical identity from Chinese cultural identity; he traced the contemporary developments in the articulation of both, but ends with questions rather than answers. He asks whether the overseas Chinese “can assume a creative role in creatively constructing a new vision of Chineseness that is more in tune with Chinese history and in sympathetic resonance with Chinese culture” (Tu 1994, 28).

This study of the religious culture of the Chinese in the Philippines, through the looking glass of the Chinese Buddhist communities, tells us that the overseas Chinese have indeed been creative in forging a religious path for themselves. The Chinese Buddhists of the Philippines are strongly rooted in the tradition of Chinese Buddhism, but they have integrated Catholicism into their practice, and some of them are nurturing what may eventually become a Filipino brand of Buddhism.

In both Chinese Buddhism and Catholic Christianity, it has been important to

highlight Chineseness in a religious context for the first two generations of immigrants. In this respect, I think Buddhism has been more successful because it had already become Chinese, whereas Chinese Catholic Christianity is still very much a work in progress. In both religions, there is an elite level of practice that strives to live the religion in a Chinese way, and this level can be found even among the younger generations of Chinese Filipinos. For both cases, the reality of syncretism also presents younger generations with a choice between continuing in a syncretic manner of practicing religion or becoming more faithful to one tradition. There are Catholics who continue to dabble in Chinese Buddhist rituals, and there are Chinese Buddhists who maintain a minimal level of Catholic practice. There are no fixed pathways for negotiating these choices, but bringing the process to awareness is a significant step in strengthening the role of religion in the formation of Chinese cultural identities.

1 Later in this conclusion, I will discuss the notion of religion and especially Chinese religion, following the discourse of Fitzgerald (1997) and Feuchtwang (2010).

2 See Goossaert and Palmer's (2011) discussion of religion in modern China, which includes references to the situation of overseas Chinese and predominantly Chinese societies like Taiwan and Singapore. If not for political considerations such as China's current official sanction to only five established religions, multiple belonging would be closer to the historical experience in China.

3 Zürcher (1980) explores Buddhist influences on early Daoism but seems to have a negative view of what Bokenkamp (2004, 320) describes as "mixing is contamination." Bokenkamp's article is on the Lingbao attempt to replace Buddhism in China and provides insights into the way the two traditions affected each other. Schipper (1994) explores the "foreign" influences on medieval Daoism, especially the attitudes toward Confucian and Buddhist elements.

4 I made reference to these in the conclusion to Chapter 4.

5 Fitzgerald (1997, 95), in a critique of the word religion, says that it is so imbued with “Judeo-Christian monotheistic associations” that it tends to color the meanings of other terms such as sacred, soteriology, and transcendent when these are used to describe other traditions.

6 Feuchtwang (2010, 12–19) provides an insightful discussion into the European origins of the word religion, and how this understanding was then used in the Chinese setting.

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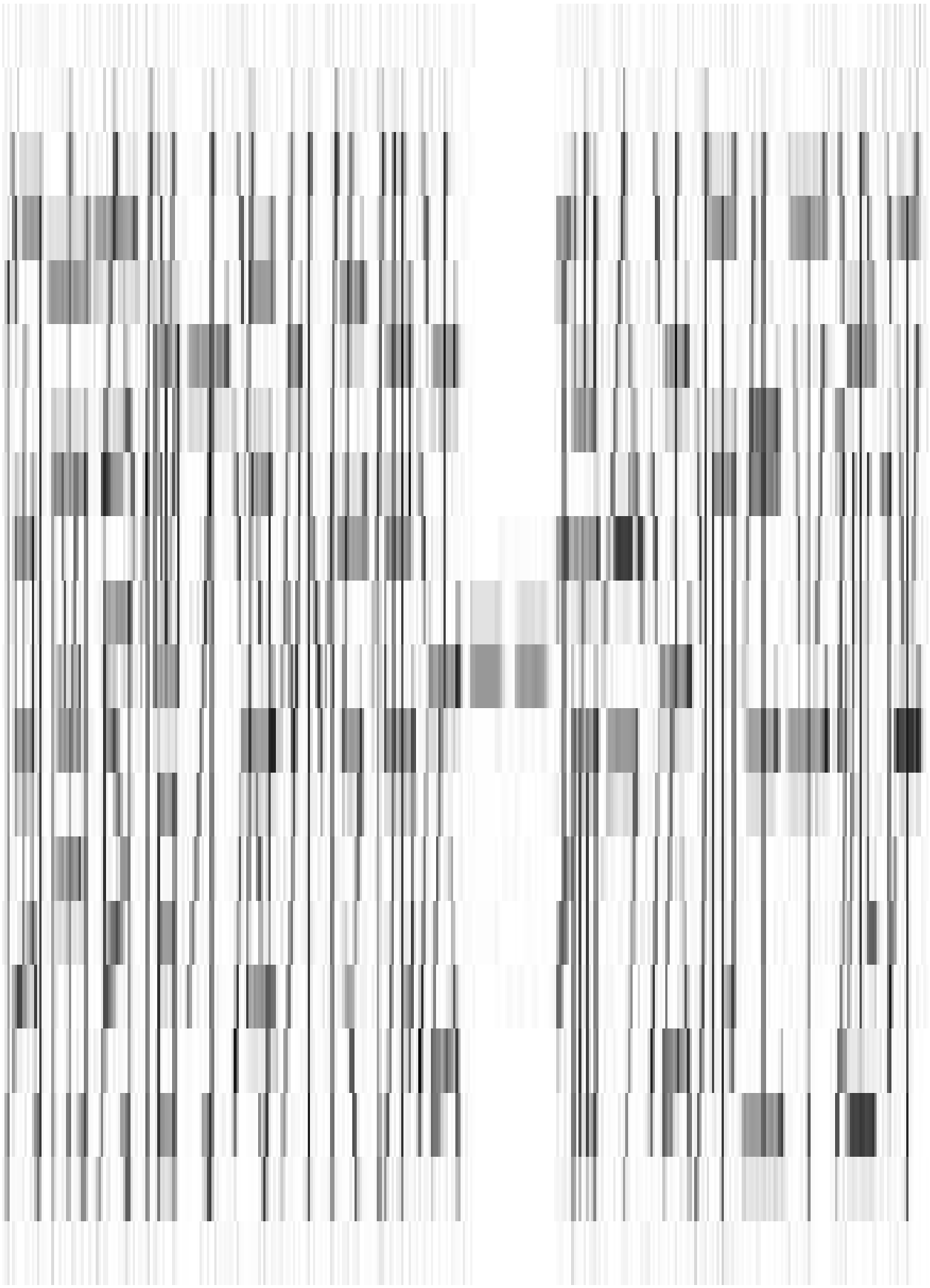
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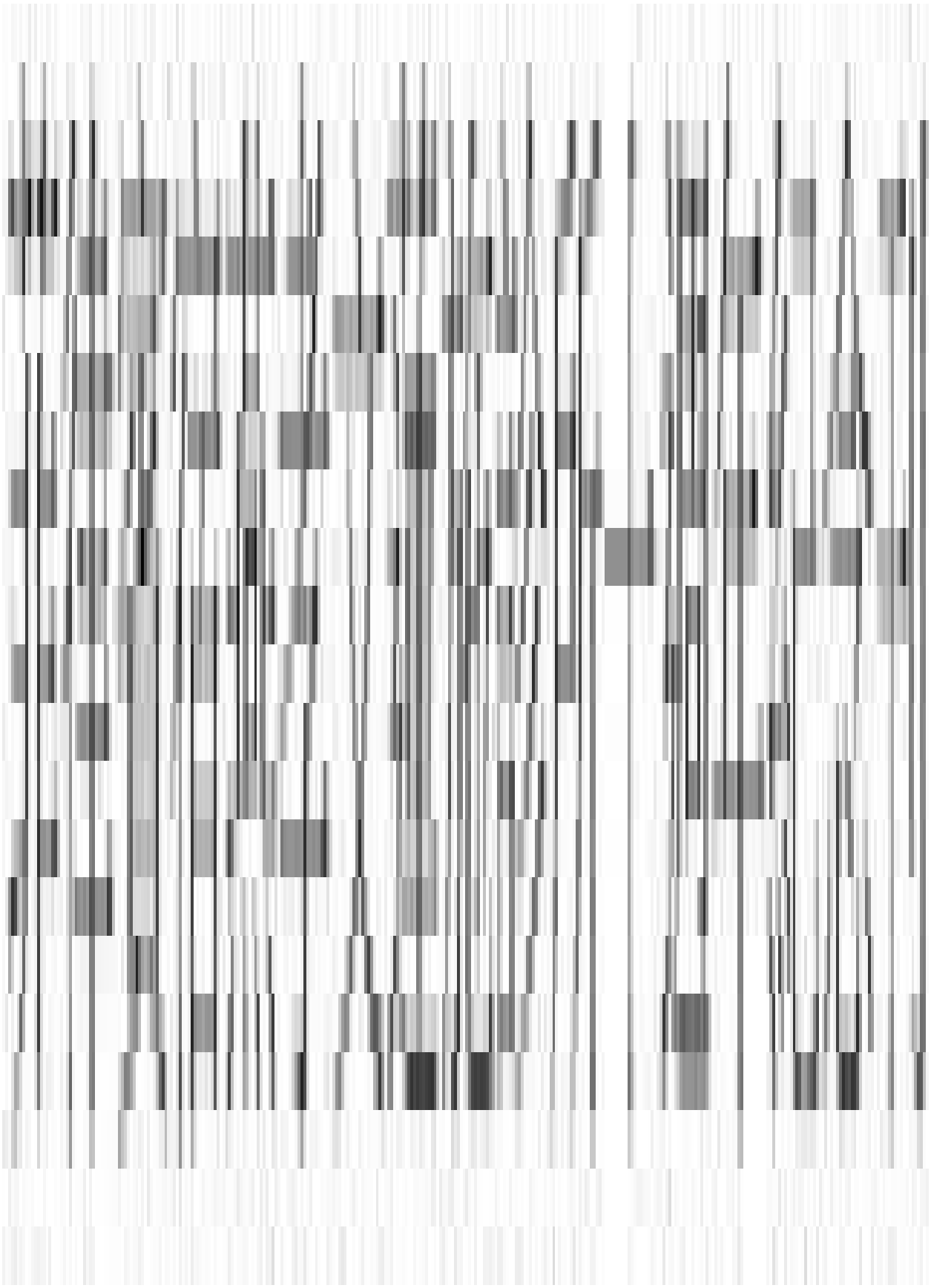
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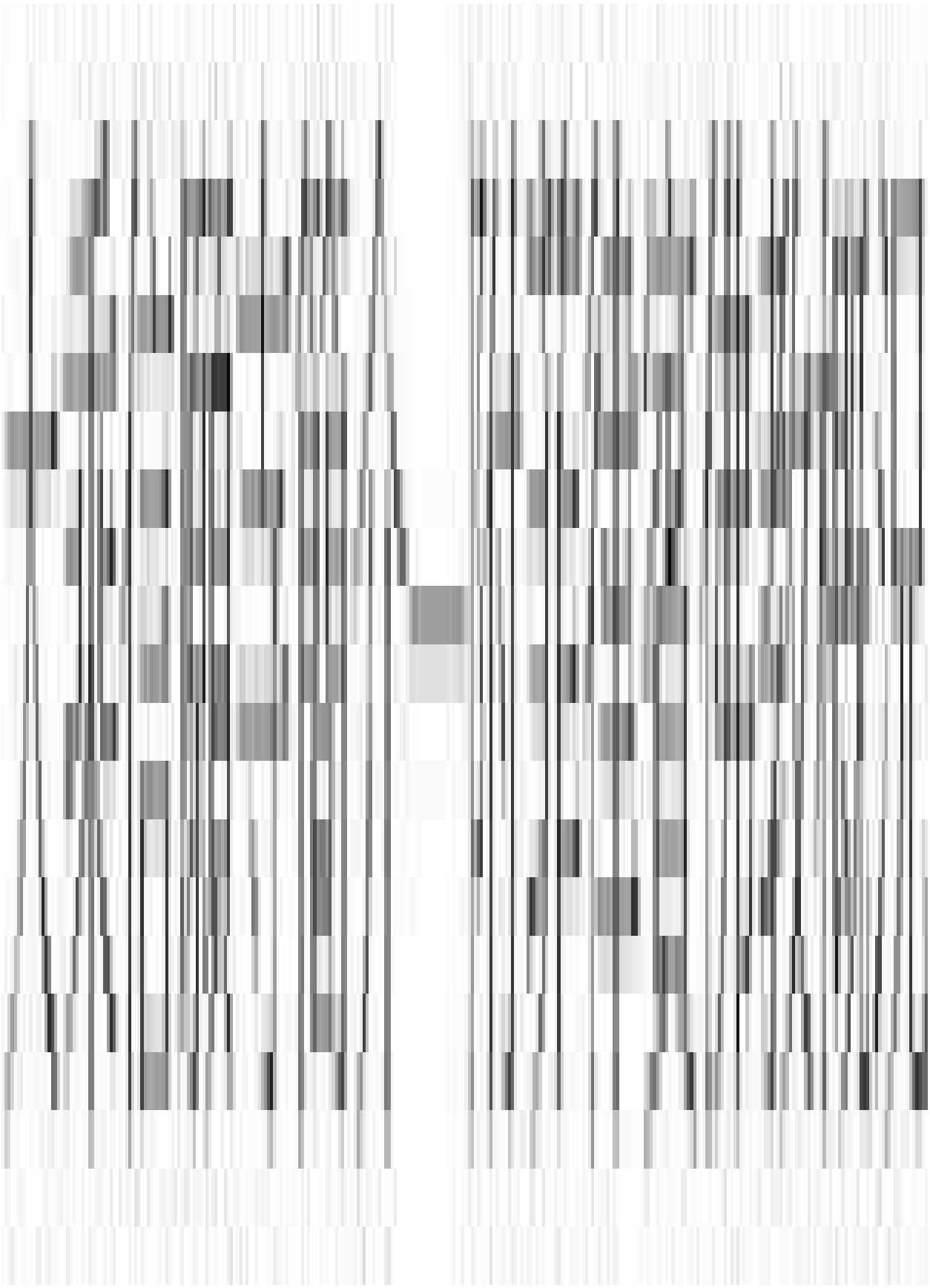
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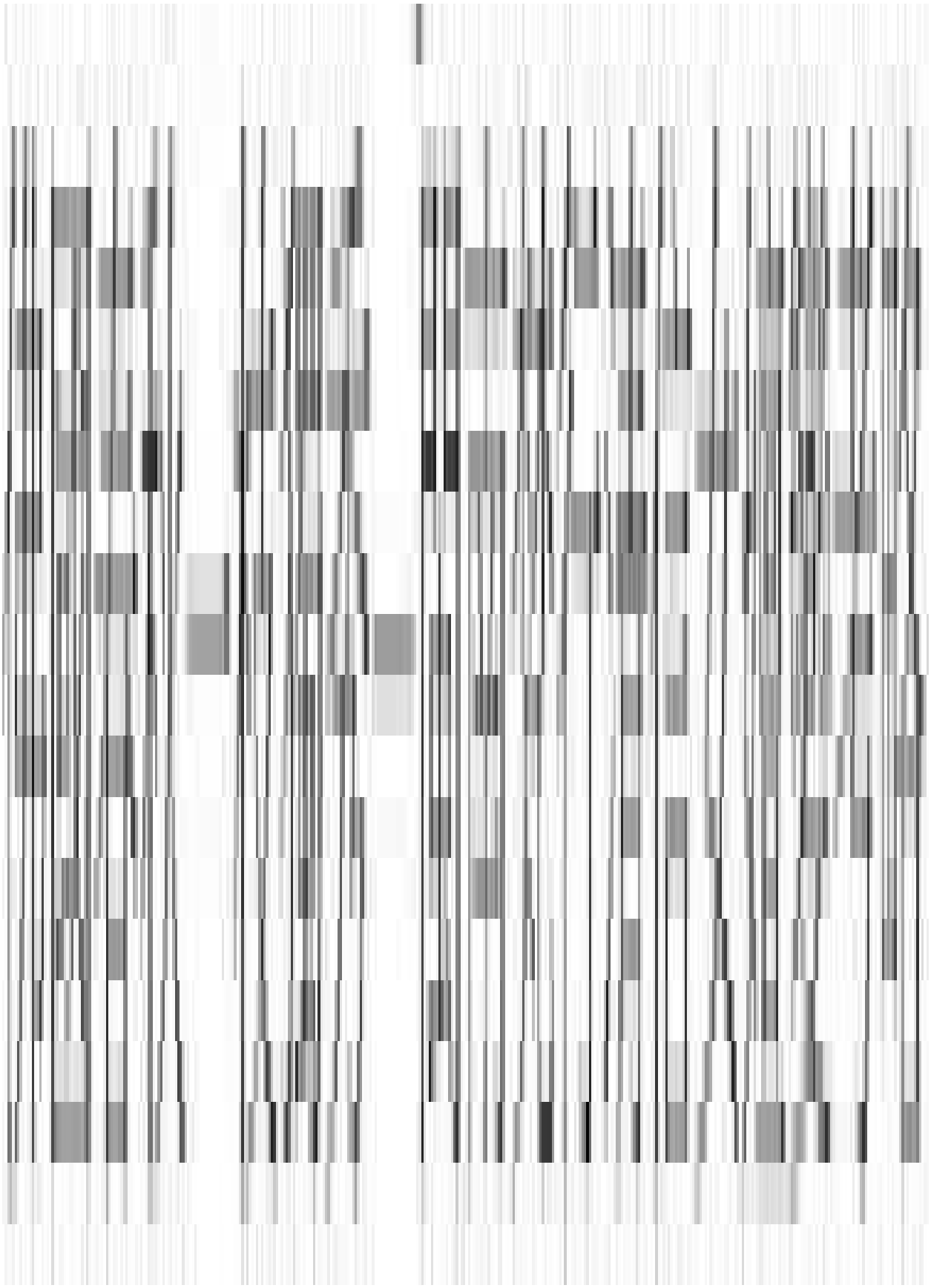
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